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SAVED BY HIS LIFE.





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THOUGHTS

ON THE

PRESENT WORK OF CHRIST.

BY

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"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His Life."—
ROMANS v. 10.

London:

WILLIAM SKEFFINGTON, 163, PICCADILLY.

1873.

141. i. 217.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, SONS, AND TAYLOR, PRINTERS,
BREAD STREET HILL.

PREFACE.

No formal treatise is attempted in the accompanying pages. The writer is fully aware that it would tax the powers of a theologian to handle in any adequate manner the points which he has ventured to touch upon. But he has been led to believe, in the course of conversations with friends, both lay and clerical, on the subject of our Blessed Lord's present work, that a simple setting forth of the revelation made of it in Holy Scripture, may at least tend to lead some minds to more definite and connected thought concerning it. That a fuller realisation of a living, acting Christ is needed by many of us appears certain. That such realisation, involving, as it does, a step towards the embrace of the whole counsel of God, in place of a too exclusive contemplation of a few great truths, must help forward our approach to Him, and strengthen our personal hold on the Saviour; that it must, by the grace of

His Holy Spirit, supply us with a surer standing-ground amid the doubt which surrounds us, and suggest the solution of doctrinal difficulties which perplex many earnest minds in this age of controversy,—appears certain also. With the sincere desire to contribute, be it in a degree ever so small, to results so happy, this little volume is published.

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SAVED BY HIS LIFE.

THOUGHTS ON THE PRESENT WORK OF

ERRATA.

Page 27, note, last line, *for this branch read* on this branch.
Page 37, line 3, dele "and later."
Page 65, line 2, *for this read* His.
Page 72, line 13, *for curse read* course.
Page 122, line 9, *for relations read* relation.
Page 138, line 19, *for mere read* more.
Page 144, line 20, *for this read* His.
Page 179, last line, *for the read* then.
Page 206, line 9, *for negendered read* engendered

... John, are altogether silent respecting a scene so remarkable. St. Mark dismisses it in a single verse.¹ St. Luke is almost equally brief in his Gospel.² In the Acts of the Apostles he tells us more; but, putting all together, we have far less of description than the grandeur and significance of the occurrence would naturally lead us to look for.

How simple, too, and matter of fact is the little whi

¹ St. Mark xvi. 19.

² St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 6.

said ! A sublime simplicity is a characteristic of all that is written concerning Christ. Still we learn how a visible glory in the opening heavens, and songs of angels heard in mid-air, helped to mark the miracle of the first Christmas morning. A strange meteor brought the Magi from the distant East to the lowly home at Bethlehem. At the Baptism in Jordan, and again at the Transfiguration, the skies contributed their witness. The sun was darkened at mid-day as the Lord hung upon the Cross. The dawn of the Resurrection had its prodigies and its descending angels with countenance like lightning and raiment white as snow. But the heavens made no sign within the view of men as the King of Glory passed into them. Only a cloud received Him out of the sight of the disciples. Angels came, it is true, but not, as before, in honour of the event. It was only when He was gone that two such stood by in white apparel to point out to the still gazing men of Galilee the lesson of the scene.

And how devoid is the narrative of the Ascension of what we call sentiment. There is no sign of sorrowful parting ; no utterance of tender farewells. It was different when Christ was about to be separated from His disciples by death, though that separation was to be only for a little while. Then sorrow filled their hearts and weighed even on the Saviour's soul.

Certainly something must be allowed for the change which during the great Forty Days had come over the relation which existed between them. He was now rather the mysterious risen Lord than the loved friend of constant intercourse. Yet still during that time their confidence had to a great extent returned. St. Peter could again question and almost chide Him. St. John could still keep close to

that gracious form on which he had been permitted to lean. Christ Himself at that great interview by the Sea of Galilee had distinctly proposed Himself as the continual object of their personal love.

His manner of leaving them then seems, in comparison, cold. The very attitude of blessing in which He withdraws suggests divine encouragement for future work rather than the fond lingering of affection. From the very neighbourhood which had witnessed some of the most marked exhibitions of Christ's human tenderness, He parts from those to whom He had become all in all, with a scant farewell.

He had led them out as far as to Bethany, which lay on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. From its neighbourhood and within its district, either from one of the wooded ridges above the village, as some modern explorers judge, or, as ancient tradition asserts, from the summit of the hill itself, He was parted from them and carried up into Heaven. Below, on one side, would lie the house where He had made a home for Himself with Martha and Mary and their brother Lazarus. Near to this is the burying-place, whither, groaning in spirit, He had followed the weeping sister, and the tomb before which He had wept. On the western descent towards Jerusalem His tears had again flowed, as He beheld the city, beautiful in situation, yet so soon to perish : while lower down, at the foot of the mount, with the brook Kedron running beyond, is the garden of Gethsemane. That garden had not only seen the truth of Christ's human soul when on the night of the Agony it drank in the blood-drops of His sweat, but had witnessed the depth of His human affection when in calmer hours "Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples."¹ And

¹ St. John xviii. 2.

when the traitor's kiss within its bounds had betrayed Him to the men who sought His life, He had shown there His anxious care and ever-present thought for His own, whom, having loved, He loved even unto the end. There He had just before excused them, as soon as the one word of reproach had passed His lips, when they could not watch with Him one terrible hour: and there now, knowing of the Cross which must be the result of His own capture, He thrusts Himself forward upon the band of men and officers, to exclaim in their behalf, "I have told you that I am He. If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way."¹

It is no mere fancy which notes the difference between those times and this. The undemonstrative character of the Ascension, as well as the simplicity and scantiness of its record, points to its true significance. There was no failure of affection on Christ's part. There was no disappointment or mistrust, though there was ignorance as to His proposed mode of action, on the part of His disciples.

It is a beginning rather than an ending; or, at least, a regular and natural step in a continuous course, and not the final scene of a completed drama. The Lord's departure is to be no separation, but the introduction of a new and abiding system of intercourse. It is no break in the work He has commenced, but its establishment on a grander and more effectual scale. Jesus, as St. Luke reminds us, did but "*begin* both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up."²

Recalled by the words of the angels from the gaze of natural wonder which the mode of His disappearance had excited, the disciples returned to Jerusalem with a quiet

¹ St. John xviii. 8.

² Acts i. 1.

joy upon them, to await in prayer the promised opening of a life-long work for and with the Master who was gone. Previous prophecies and subsequent allusions encourage us to picture the triumphant reception which Christ met with above. We gather how He, our "God, went up with a merry noise, and the Lord with the sound of the trump;"¹ how as He rose on high, "leading captivity captive," bands of angels met him in the air, and accompanied Him with songs of joy to the entrance of Heaven: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of Glory shall come in."²

But this was on the other side of the cloud. No echoes of their Alleluias reached this earth.

Here we see a little company of disciples, sometimes secretly praising and thanking God in the Jewish temple, while an unsympathising worship is going on around them; or using the forms of that worship with a new meaning, joining in its daily chant of psalms with a deeper reference.³ But chiefly they are gathered in that upper room which has been hallowed by holiest mysteries. They are there with the ministering women, and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and His kinsmen after the flesh. They are occupied with one accord in prayer and supplication, or they are filling up, under Divine guidance, the gap which the traitor's fall and death has made in their ranks. They are waiting to realise their unbroken communication with Him Who is gone on high, and to receive, in the coming of the Holy Spirit, the gift of His all-sufficient Presence. Then they will go forth to be the willing instruments of

¹ Psalm xlvii. 5 (Prayer-book Version).

² Psalm xxiv. 7—10.

³ St. Luke xxiv. 53.

that work among men which He is directing from the right hand of God.¹

It will be our aim to trace out some of the teaching of Holy Scripture on the points which seem to be thus suggested to us. Our Lord's present life and present work have too little practical place in our spiritual system. We know that it is true that He still lives for us in Heaven, but we do not feel *how* true. We know that He is still carrying on a work of love, but we do not understand how essential a position that work occupies in His plan of salvation. Christ is to most of us chiefly a memory of the past and a hope of the future. We can look back to Him as He was, and see Him, a grand mysterious figure, moving across the stage of the world's history; and we can look forward to His second coming in the clouds of heaven. But for this, the intermediate space between the Ascension and the Judgment-day, our thoughts of Him are too often vague.

How does He stand before us as we strive to raise our eyes to Him in meditation and in prayer? It is as the Jesus of Nazareth, of Bethany, or of the Upper Chamber. Reverence prevents our assigning to the Son of God Incarnate one uniform appearance or special cast of features; yet, more or less, those of us who most strongly object to the use of outward images and representations connect our Lord in their minds with some known work of art which brings Him before us in a scene of His earthly career. Raffaello and Guido, with later painters such as Ary Scheffer, suggest the Christ of many a spiritualist in theory, and severest Protestants kneel debtors to the Crucifix.

Not that any real and reverent view of faith, howsoever

¹ Acts i. 13, 14, and 15—26.

obtained, is to be undervalued. Indeed, it is by fixing Him in our minds as He was upon earth, that we rise to a higher vision of Him above. It is no bad sign when He comes to us as in some stage of His former sojourn, and we add Him thus to our own daily realities. The Christian mother may see Him, the Infant Jesus, as she bends over the babe which is sleeping at her breast. The Christian lad may see Him dwelling in the calm home of obedience at Nazareth, or presenting Himself to be catechised by the astonished doctors in the temple. The workman, as he plies his honest trade, may be cheered by the vision of Joseph's workshop, and take comfort in hard times in the thought that the Son of God was known among His neighbours as "the Carpenter." The sick man in the hospital may realise Him entering the crowded porches of Bethesda, or follow His healing touch and word of power as He moves through Galilee on His continual errand of mercy. The sailor may greet Him in the watches of the night, coming on the stormy waves, as He came on Gennesareth. In our social gatherings we cannot be wrong to take Him with us to chasten and to sanctify, looking as He may have looked at the marriage-feast of Cana. In sorrow He comes to us, in His great love, almost unsought. As we sit still in the darkened house the Master draws near to cheer us, as He came to that mourning home at Bethany. We hear His very voice, and see Him as He wept for Lazarus, as His words in which He tells of Himself as "the Resurrection and the Life," meet us at the churchyard gate. And when, weary and heavy-laden, conscious of the guilt and stain of sin, we long for pardon and cleansing, do we not see Him as He hung upon the bitter Cross, pale and blood-stained, between earth and heaven?

We are not to cut ourselves off from such sights of Christ as these. When St. Paul says, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more,"¹ he does not mean that we are not to dwell upon His past history; this is indeed necessary for the further view to which he refers. We cannot think of Him as He is, nor long for Him as He is to come, until we have made Him real to ourselves as He was. But St. Paul does teach us something. He teaches us that for our steady view of Christ we must look beyond the veil, and in the daily intercourse of faith, realise Him in His glory and in His work above.

But it is our habit to reverse St. Paul's method. The Christ of the earthly ministry is our Christ. For us the Christ of the Resurrection and Ascension is passed into shadow-land.

And it is much the same with regard to His continued work for us. Christianity, according to the popular notions of our time, consists chiefly in a mental reference to that which Christ achieved during His stay on earth. His present action is recognised only as a kind of theological redundancy, as a thing grand in itself and in a certain sense interesting to us, but challenging little of the practical regard of those whose eyes are fixed upon the Cross. There is neither unbelief of the fact, nor conscious indifference to it, but it does not strike us as a vital reality. Christ's intercession above, and His Presence on earth, live as truths which possess an obscure majesty, grand thoughts which need not to be brought into any definite shape.

We shall try, then, to see how God's Word directs us to a fuller and clearer view of the Saviour: how we should

¹ 2 Cor. v. 16.

regard Him as no mere flash of glory enlightening the world for a brief space and then fading into darkness, or at best reflected vaguely from afar, like the distant lightnings of a summer night ; but as the very Sun of Righteousness, once risen and going no more down, a living energy in the heavens, descending day by day in light and warmth upon the earth. The clouds may float between Him and us ; but He is still shining behind them. They may veil Him for a time from our bodily eyes, but they cannot deprive us of His light, or cut us off from His power.

In thus seeking to gaze on the divine method, we do not forget at what threshold we kneel. Far be it from us, aided and directed as we are by the wisdom and piety of Christ's saints whose works are the praise of the Churches, to attempt to reduce into a formal system the manifold mysteries of grace, or to search out all things, even the deep things of God, beyond that point to which His Word conducts us. We can but meditate humbly, as we are in duty bound to do, on the things which He has caused to be written in Scripture concerning Himself. Yet even thus, gazing on that which is made known, though the word is not for us as to Moses, " Draw not nigh," since He Himself invites us to approach, yet let it be with the reverence of Moses, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as those who stand on holy ground.¹

¹ Exodus iii. 5.

II.

THIS WORLD CHRIST'S WORLD.

LET us pause for a while that we may endeavour in some degree to realise the greatness of our object, and some of the dangers against which we should be on our guard in pursuing it. Among these latter any difficulty which this subject may present on the ground of its mysteriousness is not now included. These words are not for those whose faith is not strong enough to follow their Lord beyond the veil. True, the Ascension has been made a frequent point of attack; but for us of the old belief God's word for it is sufficient. The battle of the present day, as has been well said, is "about the very out-works of the Faith." On one side is the endeavour to eliminate the supernatural from Religion altogether. On the other comes the simple inquiry, Has God said this or that? Grant that Revelation is possible, and we have only to ask whether a particular matter has been revealed. Earnest minds are more and more clearly perceiving that compromise is impossible. If, in the case before us, shrinking from the idea of the presence of a man in Heaven, or asking how any can be said to ascend when philosophers tell us there is no difference between down and up as regards the earth, we begin to throw doubt around the literal fact of the Ascension, we virtually abandon the whole principle of belief. To insist on bringing down one Divine mystery to the level of our comprehension is to resign Revelation as a whole.

And this is not the mind of ordinary Christians; of

people who are content to be deemed fools by those who arrogate to themselves the entire stock of human wisdom. The Word of the Lord is precious unto us in these days when there is no open vision. Though it sometimes appears as if the lamp of God were going out in this temple of the Lord, where once, as we feel sure, the Ark of God was, and so many of His servants have seemingly laid themselves down to sleep; yet our chief care, let us trust, is to catch the sound of the Divine voice; our heart's cry in the dimness is, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."¹

It is not to be denied, however, that there have been some from an early age of the Church who have had special difficulty in holding that which, as we shall see, our Lord distinctly insists on, and which they could not bring themselves formally to reject. Since the rise of the Alexandrian School in the third century, a school which mingled heathen philosophy with Christian doctrine, and whose tendency was to explain away into allegory and figure those statements of Divine Truth which surpass human thought, writers who would not willingly be heterodox have adopted a loose mode of speaking which has induced a confusion in many honest minds.

It seems strange that any who believe in the Incarnation should stumble at the Ascension. The point of difficulty occurs in the earlier stage. We cannot understand any conjunction of the finite with the Infinite. Grant this conjunction; grant that He who is very God was born into the world, lay at a mother's breast, grew with human growth in mind and body; grant that He hungered, and thirsted, and suffered, and died: and how is it hard to believe that, freed from the pain, the humiliation, the shame of His

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 1—10.

previous course, He continues the same Jesus, carrying on and perfecting His work in the light of Heaven?

"Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness. God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels; preached unto the Gentiles; believed on in the world,"—then wherefore not "received up into glory"?¹

Surely good men, who allow themselves to doubt here, do not see how their doubt eats into the very foundations of the Faith. It approaches the ancient error of those who regarded Christ's Body as a mere appearance or phantom. The difference lies only in the presumed date. The Docetæ made the appearance to correspond with Christ's life on earth. These make it commence at His Resurrection.

But, beyond this, it is not going too far to say that without belief in Christ's present Manhood there is no true belief in the Incarnation. A disappearing Christ is not the Christ of the Gospel. That Gospel tells us of the Son of God not appearing for a few short years as man, not assuming manhood as a mere instrument to be taken up and laid down at will, "like a garment to be put on and off as occasion requires;" not as Godhead joined for a time to a human person in order to achieve a certain work and then to vanish again, as the Hindoos conceive of Vishnu; but as God *made* man. To ask, as the words of our fourth Article occur to our minds, "Where is it said in the Bible that the Godhead and Manhood were joined together in one person never to be divided?" is to convict ourselves of failure to grasp the Christian doctrine which we profess. The proof lies here. "The Word was *made* flesh."² The manhood was taken into God. It is henceforth a part of Himself. In the Incarnation occurs a union of absolute permanency. "That

¹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

² St. John i. 14.

which God hath joined together, let no man," even in thought, dare to "put asunder."

Our difficulty lies rather in conceiving of ourselves as living under the immediate and personal dispensation of Christ. We are naturally slow to recognise the greatness and wonderfulness of things which are immediately around us. Our heroes are heroes of days gone by. If the histories which excite us do not lie far back in the past, they are certainly not those of our own age. What chance have the favourite great men of the present century with King Alfred and the Chevalier Bayard? Or to come to the experience of those of us who have reached middle life. Many of us will remember how our hearts leapt up within us in our early years, as we heard tell of the great events of our fathers' childhood. There were, according to our imagination, giants in the earth in those days, and for ourselves to live while mighty deeds like theirs should be doing seemed past hoping for. Yet, when we found ourselves surrounded by events in no respect inferior, when occurrences on a scale even more vast were flashed to us day by day, or when we read of them at our leisure by our firesides, we received everything with an unexpected calmness. The past few years will be new to us if we live to appreciate them in the reading of some powerful history as yet unwritten. We require distance of time, not merely to lend enchantment, but to give reality to the mental view.

May not this help to account for the little abiding effect of wonders such as those of the Exodus, and our Lord's own miracles, on the persons who witnessed them? We lack power to grasp the present. It is easy to say, "O God, we have heard with our ears and our fathers have declared unto us the noble works that Thou didst in their

days and in the old time before them ;” but to recognise ourselves as the subjects of Divine interferences is hard.

So the thought that we live under the very hand of Christ is too high for us. It might have been so for others in past time : it may be so again in a distant future ; but oh ! the overwhelming idea that He is directly acting for us and among us now !

It places us under a standing miracle. By miracle we need not understand an interference with the course of nature, but any direct action and interference of a Divine Person external to us. No wonderful signs need break the order of the heavens above our head ; nor must strange convulsions shake the earth beneath our feet. Yet, at the same time, in us, who pity the deadness of men untouched by the darkness and earthquake of the Crucifixion, the Saviour may be deploring an equal inconsistency and a greater sin. It may be that for us, as we pay so little heed to the continual miracle of His Kingship and of His grace, He is offering, as He pleads His Death before the Throne, the prayer which He breathed in dying ; and that as He interceded for the Jews and Romans who stood around the Cross, so with sorrowful heart does He intercede for us now, “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”¹

The state of the world around us adds to our difficulty. It seems as if Christ had gone back to Heaven and left men to themselves. Can this be indeed Christ’s world, we are inclined to ask, the unceasing object of the Divine care, the scene of His continual operation, when we see it going on with so little thought, so little love, so much that is a disgrace to His Name ? Questioning thus, we let that which ought to stand out a distinct and positive fact ever

¹ St. Luke xxiii. 34.

influencing our daily lives, fade into a weak general idea. Elijah under the juniper tree despaired of God's cause, and we, like Elijah, judging of Christ's work by results visible to ourselves, and making contemporary acceptance of Divine rule the measure of Divine faithfulness, begin to ask, "Is the Lord among us or not?"

True the little recognition our Lord receives is a difficulty; but it is a difficulty which is not peculiar to belief in His present power. The same kind of perplexity would await the veriest deist could he sweep away every vestige of Christianity from the world. The condition of mankind is as much an argument against any action of Divine power whatever, as it is against any particular mode in which that power may be exercised. It is more reasonable to account for any comparative ill-success of Christ's kingdom by man's failure to recognise and work for his King, than on that ground to deny the reality of the King's rule; especially since we know that He who has power to compel is pleased to leave for the present our obedience or disobedience a matter of our own free choice.

On the other hand, there is a tendency to accept truths the most momentous in an easy and matter of course way. There is little difficulty (so clear is the teaching of God's Word) in putting the revealed action of our glorified Lord into a theological form; and certainly if the process of Divine goodness, the way in which Jesus saves us by His heavenly life, is opened out to us with a gracious freedom and fulness, it is our duty as well as our comfort to receive and meditate upon it with a corresponding confidence. But we must take care that we carry with us throughout a reverent sense of the mystery which underlies the plain teaching of Scripture. Because the meaning of the terms in which

the revelation is made to us lies upon the surface, we must not dare to give the revelation itself a superficial reception.

Collecting together passages which speak of Christ as He is now, we see certain things clearly. We know that He is in His glory, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, and that His Divine Humanity is irradiated with that heavenly brightness, some portion of which was seen beforehand in vision by the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration, and again more fully by St. John in Patmos. His session at the right hand of God is a familiar article of our creed. We speak of Him as exalted "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but in the world to come."¹ And then we go on quietly to say that in His exaltation, King of Heaven itself, far above all creation, the praise of angels, One in the eternal Godhead, the Lord Jesus still claims this world as His own, and makes us each the constant objects of His care.

All this is quite true in itself, and it is probably true to some extent to us when we are reading our Bibles, or meditating on the scheme of Christian doctrine. But is it true to us as we try in thought to follow Christ whither He is gone, and regard Him not as a religious idea, but as a real Person? Can we see Him by faith stooping to us from His glory as we raise our eyes to the deep blue sky by day, or at night as we see it studded with its thousands of stars?

David, who remembered, perhaps, the effect which the sight of the heavens produced upon him when he lay out beneath the calm magnificence of an Eastern night, tending

¹ Eph. i. 21.

his father's flock on the plains of Bethlehem, or later, when, a king, he arose from his bed and walked on the terraces of a palace, "preventing the night watches" that he might meditate upon God and His Word,¹ exclaims, "When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"² But how much greater cause for awful wonder have we, both from our knowledge of the vastness of God's universe and of the nearness with which God visits men in Christ! The telescope has not only enlarged our view by the magnitude which it reveals; it almost overwhelms us by the infinity which it suggests. It shows how our earth is but as a speck in the vast creation of the Great Father; and, making known to us millions of systems which have no apparent connection with our own, forbids us to limit God's love and care to the inhabitants of a single planet. "The image of the Creator cannot be confined to a mote in the sunbeam of His glory;" nor can that creative work, which is a chief attribute of the Eternal, be bounded by the brief lifetime of our globe.

If this be so, if we are less than a family of minutest insects among God's creatures who might be swept away almost unobserved in the inconceivable multitude, what is it to believe that there exists an inseparable connection between ourselves and the Son of God;³ to know that,

¹ Psalm cxix. 148.

² Psalm viii. 3, 4.

³ The contrast between our own littleness and God's greatness, useful as it is for checking thoughts of pride and self-sufficiency, is so awful that without some corrective it might become positively dangerous. But such corrective even Science supplies. The microscope balances the telescope. The one opens out to us a vastness which almost appals; the other reveals a minuteness which reassures. We learn that the God

while the universe hangs on His will, He is still a man and busy for men ; that "at those majestic levees, where H Whom the worlds were made, surrounds His throne with the directing powers of the innumerable orbs He first summoned into being, amid the glittering millions that encompass Him, the marvellous tale is whispered that the Sovereign of all that infinity of glory has yet a bond of special and thrilling tenderness that links Him with one little province in creation?"¹

"Jean Paul, in one of his magnificent Dreams, has endeavoured to present to the mind the infinite extent and fulness of the universe. He represents his own disembodied spirit as carried by thought from system to system through the starry skies under the conduct of some Angel of light. Wearied at length and bowed down with the overwhelming sense of his littleness, as he traverses the desolate intervals between world and world, he prays that he may go no further: 'I am lonely in creation ; lonelier in these wastes. The full world is great ; but vacancy is greater.' And the answer came : 'In the sight

Who acts on so magnificent a scale condescends to things the smallest. The care and perfection manifested in systems of worlds are continued down to the least considerable of insects and to the tiniest of shells. If the lower forms of life around us thus display His careful workmanship, we need not fear lest His chiefest work in this world should be unheeded by Him, or conceive ourselves lost in an intolerable crowd.

But it is the Incarnation after all which supports us under the weight of our present knowledge. Small as the world is, it must be great in the heart of God, or God would not have sent His Son to redeem it. Insignificant as we are in ourselves, our littleness is counterbalanced by Christ's assumption of our nature. In this there is for us, ephemera of God's universe as we are, a guarantee of abiding greatness.

¹ Sermons by W. Archer Butler, late Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Dublin. First Series, p. 191.

of God there is no vacancy. Even now, O Child of Man, let thy quickened eye behold, and thy dreaming heart embrace the depths of Being which are around thee.' Then his eye was opened, and a sea of light filled all the spaces which had seemed desolate before, and his heart felt the presence of an unspeakable power, swelling in varied forms of existence around him. Suns and planets were seen to float as specks in the vast ocean of life which was revealed to him. For a time he was conscious of no pain. Immeasurable joy and thanksgiving filled his soul. But in this glorious splendour his guide had vanished. He was alone in the midst of life, and he yearned for some companionship. 'Then there came sailing onwards,' he continues, 'from the depth, through the galaxies of the stars, a dark globe along a sea of light; and a human form, as a child, stood upon it, which neither changed nor yet grew greater as it drew near. At last I recognised our Earth before me, and on it the Child Jesus, and He looked upon me with a look so bright and gentle and loving, that I awoke for love and joy.'"¹

This is the miracle of love we have to gaze upon. May God give us His grace to bring such a reality home to our hearts.

¹ I have ventured to extract the above striking passage from "The Gospel of the Resurrection," by Dr. B. F. Westcott, now Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge.

III.

*THE PREPARATORY CHARACTER OF OUR LORD'S
TEACHING.*

OUR Blessed Lord's teaching ever points to His coming offices in man's behalf, and confirms the impression, which the Gospel account of the Ascension creates, that His entrance into Heaven was to involve no real separation between Himself and His followers.

His ministry throughout bears traces of its preparatory character—preparatory, that is, not merely to a state of things which is to ensue when His bodily Presence is withdrawn, but to His own immediate personal administration. Yet it seems as if we generally failed to perceive how completely Christ, as He is made known to us in the Gospels, has His eye on the future ; and we thus miss one chief clue to the understanding of a large proportion of their contents.

It has been objected, for example, against our Lord's teaching that it is incomplete as a system, and mysterious in its details. If it were to be taken as a precise and formal enunciation of a new Religion, there would be some ground for the complaint. But if, while He presented fair credentials of His mission, and spoke, as His enemies acknowledged that He did, with a present aptness and power,¹ He did not profess to put forth a finished philosophy, but was rather preparing the way for a faith which should be founded on subsequent acts of His own, and which should be doctrinally developed under His own spiritual direction ; then

¹ St. John vii. 46 ; St. Matt. vii. 28.

the objection at once falls to the ground. Even when His words are primarily addressed to captious Pharisees and hard Sadducees, He speaks to futurity ; and in His discourses to His disciples He has chiefly in view their guidance and comfort when a new power of understanding shall be imparted after His own voice has ceased to be heard among them.

And we see how the result has justified His method. Millions have treasured up in their hearts with a fruitful thankfulness sayings which, as they fell from His lips, seemed vague and remote from their immediate purpose. Unnumbered souls have fed eagerly on spiritual food which was at first refused as hard by those to whom it was offered. "Who and what must this Teacher be Who could thus afford to lose the present in the future," and Who could count upon the firm adhesion of unborn multitudes through the very method which offended the critics of His time, and which perplexed even to estrangement some of those who walked with Him ?

His employment of Parables is in itself an illustration of His purpose. Not only do they refer to the future and require in many instances an historical fulfilment,¹ but

¹ For instance, in the Parables our Lord opens to us the future of His coming kingdom. He pictures its reception in the world ; the gradual growth of evil within it ; its mighty increase from a minute beginning ; the eventual separation between bad and good. The meaning of some of them could not be entered into previously to the knowledge of His death and bodily departure. The invited guests, the dressers of the vineyard, the tares and the wheat, the net with its fishes both bad and good, the mustard-seed and the leaven, the rejection and murder of the heir and the fate of his murderers, all depend for their appropriateness on events which, when He spoke, were among things to be.

The line of thought pursued in the text is worked out with great fulness by the present Bishop of Salisbury (Dr. Moberly) in his work on "The Great Forty Days."

they convey instruction in a form which is intended to remain imprinted on the minds of hearers even when their inner meaning is unperceived. They are like the picturesque stories of our childhood which we have never forgotten, though, it may be, years passed by before the moral of such of them as have a moral dawned upon us. Christ spoke from the ship by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, or in the Temple, or on the Mount of Olives, in anticipation of a time when the light of the Holy Spirit should be poured in upon the memory of the Jews who then listened to Him, and upon those men throughout the whole world for whom His words were to be preserved. Then and not till then (save in part for a favoured few at His own mouth) should that be made clear which was at first dark, and there should be "nothing hid which should not be manifested, neither anything kept secret but that it should come abroad."¹

But what is stronger yet is the fact that even His moral teaching, His issuing of laws which are based on eternal principles, is continually mixed up with an approaching dispensation. Even the Sermon on the Mount supposes circumstances which were not to come to pass for some years, and the existence of a Church which it needed His return to Heaven to call into active life.

The beatitudes imply a new Kingdom of Righteousness and sufferings to be endured for its sake. The future conspicuous position of the Apostolic Church; the relation which Christianity should bear to the Law and the Prophets; the new principles by which its members are to be governed, as well as definite duties to be performed by them, all suppose a state of things at hand, but not yet arrived. God is to be addressed as a Father, but it is in

¹ St. Mark iv. 22.

anticipation of a sonship which was not then vouchsafed. The Holy Spirit is promised in answer to prayer, but the Comforter was not to come until Jesus had departed. The Almsgiving spoken of is evidently Christian Almsgiving ; the Fasting is certainly Christian Fasting, for it was not to be practised until the Bridegroom was taken away. The Lord's Prayer, according to the consent of Christendom, was not to be confined in its use to the brief remaining portion of His earthly career. And what is the Altar to which gifts are to be brought, and which is to be approached only in the spirit of love and charity? It is really difficult to suppose that a rule so solemnly laid down and so markedly preserved to us is only for the disciples during the short period which was to occur before the Jewish Altar should be superseded and Temple offerings become to them things of the past : and it is even more difficult to accept that gloss which resolves a definite direction of our Lord occurring among other directions confessedly practical, into a figurative recommendation of an inward feeling.¹

The same principle, connecting religious frames of mind which are ever to be aimed at with particular conditions shortly to come into force, is observable throughout Christ's discourses. When the disciples needed a lesson of humility we find Him impressing it in a striking manner by calling a little child to Him and setting him in their midst as a model for their imitation. But even child-like humility is spoken of as a qualification for His coming Kingdom ; and the opportunity is taken for a further lesson as to the preciousness of these little ones when that Kingdom shall be in operation.² Compassion is inculcated in the Parable

¹ Cf. St. Mark v. vi. vii.

² St. Matt. xviii. 1—6.

of the Unmerciful Servant, but it is based on mercy already received, mercy purchased for us, as we know, on the Cross which was then only threatening.¹ Christians must watch, but their vigilance is to be exercised in looking out for the return of Him of Whose departure the men to whom He spoke had but a dim idea.²

And His direct doctrinal teaching shows the same peculiarity. As He spoke of men taking up their Cross to follow Him when He had not yet been crucified, so at the Feast of Tabernacles we find Him making what sounds like a present offer for the allaying of men's spiritual thirst, though in reality He referred to a blessing which was not actually to be enjoyed until some time afterwards. "In the last day, that great day of the feast," when, amid the sound of trumpets, they brought water in golden vessels from the pool of Siloam, "Jesus stood and cried saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."³ In the same way He bids His followers hear the Church, when He could yet say "On this rock *will* I build it." No one could suppose that He intended His disciples to go to the Scribes and Pharisees to settle their differences as long as He Himself was with them. Thus He could not mean that they were to hear the Jewish Church in any case, even if He did not immediately intimate that He refers to the coming Church of the Apostles by adding

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 21—35. Cf. St. Luke vi. 37.

² St. Mark xiii. 32, 37. Cf. Dr. Moberly, "Great Forty Days."

³ St. John vii. 37—39.

His promise to ratify in Heaven the judgments which they shall pronounce in His name on earth.¹

In the same way He looks forward to Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Any difficulty or reluctance which some of our brethren may feel in understanding the midnight conversation with Nicodemus to apply to one Sacrament and the discourse at Capernaum to the other, can scarcely arise from the fact that they were not instituted at the time Christ spoke, when it is observed that on each occasion, in conformity with that principle which was habitual with Him, He refers to other distinctly future events as if they were already present to the minds of His hearers as they were to His own.²

The only question is, how far our Lord connects Himself with this future dispensation, and makes His own personal action, His own immediate care and supervision, an element of His scheme.

The position is really this. The Incarnate Son of God is going back to Heaven, a miracle of Divine love performed, but its results as yet almost imperceptible. The Architect of our Zion had sketched out His plan. He had engaged and given His preliminary instructions to the leading workmen. He had impressed upon them the general principles on which the work was to be conducted, and referred to details the place of which was by no means clear. Then He left them for a while to pay the price of the purchase, and returned to make good His title to the possession. Nay, and here comparison fails, in Himself the foundation was laid, and in His sacred Person the head

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 15—18.

² In St. John iii. 14, 15, He refers to His own death. In St. John vi. He implies His death throughout, and refers to His Ascension, ver. 62.

corner-stone was approved. But not a course of the walls had as yet arisen. He disappears in the clouds of Heaven at the very time when, according to man's judgment, His Presence was most needed upon earth.

Are we justified in considering that Christ by His Ascension cut Himself off from further direct part in that work which He had taken such pains to introduce, and the infinite importance of which He had marked by the tremendous sacrifice of Himself? Are we, under the influence of any theory (whether of the substitution of the action of the Holy Spirit, or of the representative character of the Church), to think of Him as returning to take but a dim and distant interest, where His own Agony of soul and body had not been spared? Are we to suppose that if, not altogether careless of mankind as He sits "with the clouds beneath Him curled" like some fabled deity of Olympus, He has ceased from active interference in behalf of that world which He still calls His own?

Reverting to the Parables, we find that, though His bodily absence is signified, His personal interposition is clearly inferred. As regards our immediate sight of Him with the bodily eye He is the absent Householder, the Bridegroom who is to arrive at midnight, the man travelling into a far country. Yet He who, through the ages of human trial, ever soweth the good seed, is the Son of Man. His field is the world, a field which to this day is not fully brought under the operation of His hand. The great owner of the vineyard goes forth, not only early in the morning, and at the third hour, but at the sixth and ninth, and on up to the eleventh itself.¹

So throughout His teaching. In the reception of His

¹ Cf. St. Matt. xiii. and xx.

appointed agents He is Himself received. He is with the least of His brethren in practical oneness and sympathy. To Him, as to a living Saviour, Teacher, and Master, the weary and heavy-laden of all times are invited to come. His personal gentleness and tenderness are for the bruised reed and smoking flax of that Gentile world to which during His earthly life He was unknown. Whenever and wherever God's will shall be done, He will be at hand to recognise a brother and sister and mother. He continually offers spiritual drink to thirsty souls, and dispenses the bread of life to them that come to Him to receive it.¹

Were we arguing against gainsayers instead of attempting to draw out truths which are the stay of our own souls, we could scarcely touch upon one line of thought which illustrates our present point, because it depends rather on the insight of devout minds than on such demonstration as might satisfy doubting ones. I refer to the typical character of much that our Lord did.²

Many of the more marked occurrences of His life have been considered to be significant of future spiritual processes. By His Baptism in the river Jordan we declare in our Baptismal Service (after St. Ambrose) that He sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin. In His Temptation we see pledge of victory for the tempted. In His

¹ Cf. St. Luke x. 40; St. Matt. xxv. 40—45; xi. 28; xii. 20, 21, 50; St. John iv. 14; vi. 35; vii. 37.

² If ever imaginative power was restrained by deepest reverence, and human fancy brought into sternest subjection in the face of God's revealed Word, while learning was present to inform and truest spiritual insight to guide, it was in the case of John Keble. Yet he, in one of his well-known works, has fully set forth (with a never-to-be-forgotten deduction) the bearing of the Gospel in this direction. See his treatise "On Eucharistical Adoration," pp. 35—62, from which much of what follows on this branch of the subject is in substance derived.

Transfiguration we have a prevision of the glory with which in Him the saints shall be clothed; while we have the authority of our Prayer-book again, in the same Baptismal Service, for understanding the flow of water and of blood from His pierced side on the Cross as signifying the two holy Sacraments. In the same way lesser incidents of His career seem designed to impress their peculiar lesson. His miracles correspond in a marked manner with His Parables, and are as acted prophecies confirming those His spoken ones. The draught of fishes is thus the parable of the net cast into the sea. The miracle of the loaves illustrates the Bread of Life. In the same way our Lord's miraculous cures carry on our minds to spiritual counterparts, and suggest the Great Physician Who is to be the Healer of men's souls. Giving sight to the blind tells of light for soul-darkness; casting out of evil spirits foreshadows a less palpable but not less real exorcism. In making the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak, He gives us a pledge of the performance in our cases of the spiritual promise that the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped to Gospel Truth, and the tongue of the dumb sing the Redeemer's praise. Even the mode in which His wonders were effected foreshadows His coming purpose. His miraculous cures bring home to us the truth, that it is by the touch of Christ, by individual access to His sacred Person, that His saving and healing work is effected in our souls.

His ordinary method was to communicate His gifts by means of such touch. The exceptions to this rule are (as Mr. Keble points out) only eleven out of thirty-three. And these exceptions are to be accounted for. Five are cases of the casting out of unclean spirits. Upon such cases as

these Jesus never laid His hands. In one instance only, that of the dumb and deaf spirit mentioned by St. Mark, He raises the victim from the ground where he lay as if dead; but this was after the evil influence was departed from him, and was intended to help and reassure, not to effect the miracle.¹ In six other cases the faith of the persons to be healed, or of the friends who intercede in their behalf, is the prominent idea, since the efficacy of Christ's Presence was already believed in. Our Lord thus shows how His power may be exercised even when distance separates us from His physical touch. But usually He seems anxious to convey the idea of virtue to be imparted by direct communication from His sacred Person. Laying on of His hands was so habitually His practice that the power of cure became associated with it in the minds of His followers as well as of those who desired His help.² This belief extended itself to the virtue of His body communicating a healing force to the very clothes which He wore. When a humble sufferer came, saying to herself, "If I may but touch the hem of His garment I shall be made whole," instead of being reproved for superstition, she was commended for her faith.³ And this faith was widely recognised by the Saviour. "Whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought Him that they might touch if it were but the border of His garment: and as many as touched Him were made whole."⁴

Now, if we are right in understanding all this to be intended to convey a spiritual lesson to ourselves, and to teach us that it is in virtue flowing out of Christ's Humanity

¹ St. Mark ix. 17—27.

² St. Matt. ix. 18; St. Mark v. 23.

³ St. Matt. ix. 20—22.

⁴ St. Mark vi. 56.

and imparted to us one by one by Christ's spiritual touch, that we are to look for His saving work, then His present and continual office and relation to us follows as a matter of course. As was said above, this is not pressed as an argument against those who are unable to appreciate it. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

But to return to our Lord's words.

Before His Death His assurances of future care begin to abound. He had previously encouraged His disciples with precious promises, as when, speaking of a use of His Name which hitherto they had not learned to make, He declares, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."¹ Towards the end, however, His tenderness breaks forth in repeated assurances. "I go to prepare a place for you. . . . Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, *that will I do*." "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you." "Yet a little while and the world seeth Me no more; but ye see Me, and because I live ye shall live also." "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist." "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." "Abide in Me and I in you. . . . Without Me ye can do nothing." And His touching prayer for the unity of His Church, which so grandly concludes the solemn address of the Paschal evening, is founded on the continued union which shall exist between His disciples and Himself, and, in Himself, with the Father.²

¹ St. Matt xviii. 20.

² Cf. St. John xiv.—xvii.

We have purposely omitted, so far, a feature of our Lord's teaching which is sufficient in itself to convince us that we err if we interpose distance of time and space between ourselves and Him. He is ever speaking of His "Kingdom;" for that which He calls the "Kingdom of Heaven" and the "Kingdom of God" He claims as His own.

Now when was that Kingdom, in whatever it may consist, to commence?

Clearly not during His own lifetime, and, as clearly, during the lifetime of some to whom He spoke.

Though He was announced as a King by the Angel Gabriel, and recognised as a born King by the wise men of the East, yet thirty years after His birth, and not three years before His Crucifixion, Christ declared His Kingdom to be, not come, but "at hand." And, though He accepted His proclamation by the voice of the multitude five days before the end, and at the bar of Pilate maintained His claim to Kingship, yet He died with no signs of royalty about Him but the mocking purple robe, the crown of thorns, and the mockingly-devised but most true inscription which hung over His head upon the Cross.

Notwithstanding, it was literally true of some who were beside Him on a certain day as He walked on the way to Cæsarea Philippi, that they should not taste of death until they had seen His Kingdom in powerful operation.¹

He Himself furnishes us with the date of His accession. Of course it is understood that we are speaking of Christ as King as He is the Son of Man, and not of the divine right of His eternal Godhead by which He is ever King. It was when, as Man, He had overcome the

¹ St. Matt. xvi. 28; St. Mark ix. 1; St. Luke ix. 27.

sharpness of death, that He opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers; opened it not only as procuring the admission of believers into its final glories, but as initiating its present power. He came back from the dead announcing the fact that henceforth all power is given unto Him both in Heaven and in earth.¹

And in what did this Kingdom consist?

It is usual to interpret the phrase "the Kingdom of Heaven," or "the Kingdom of God," as if our Lord used it at different times in different senses. Is it not nearer the truth to conceive that He ever spoke of one and the same thing, though He referred on various occasions now to one, now to another of its features? His own Coming in the Flesh, the visible Church, the inward power of the Gospel, the Transfiguration, the destruction of Jerusalem, the end of the world, are all called His "Kingdom;" but it is evident that in no one of them, taken by itself, can all the marks of the Kingdom be deemed to meet.

The Incarnation, though a necessary step to it, cannot be the Kingdom, because the Kingdom was still future when Christ's sojourn on earth ended. The visible Church is not sufficient, though the visible Church is most frequently thus spoken of as being its great outward manifestation, since the Kingdom of God is said to come not with outward signs to be watched for, but with inward power. But it cannot be the inward power of the Gospel alone, since it is to have an outward life and to include a society which should contain a mixture of the evil with the good. It cannot be simply the Transfiguration or the destruction of Jerusalem, for these are passing events, while "the Kingdom" is abiding. And, since it was to be

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

seen by persons living in our Lord's time, it cannot be solely the future Kingdom of Glory, though in glory it is to receive its full development.

It seems more simple and more Scriptural to take the idea which the proclamation of the Kingdom of Heaven would naturally awaken in the Jewish mind, and, using the light of the Gospel to separate from this idea mistakes with which the spiritual blindness of the Jews, added to their national bigotry, overlaid it, to regard that which remains as our guide to Christ's meaning.

And this gives us an interpretation which combines and harmonizes all that is said on the subject.

The startling message of the Baptist on the banks of Jordan, which was taken up by the calm voice of Jesus, would call back a familiar thought into the minds of God's ancient people. That cry, "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," would awaken the memory of the golden days of the Jewish national life, when God was indeed their God, and they were under His direct personal rule and guidance. The Kingdom of Heaven was to them the immediate Kingship of God. To this idea, which their prophets had pointed to as approaching in the future, they fondly clung. They had indeed encumbered it with additions, and looked for the coming of an earthly King in the promised Messiah, who should sit on an earthly throne in Jerusalem, and restore the lost glories of their race. From such false notions our Blessed Lord took pains to wean His followers; but, these being removed, He accepted the main idea of a personal sovereignty, and declined to resolve His kingly dignity into a mere figure of speech. At the same time, He points out the spiritual, though real, character of His reign. He indicates how not one favoured nation only

but all mankind are to become His subjects; how His Kingdom is not to be "of this world," while, as to its visible portion, it is to be "in the world;" how, like the ladder of Jacob's dream, its top is hidden in Heaven, while its lower part rests among men upon earth.

We understand, then, by the Kingdom of Heaven, the personal rule and dispensation of Christ; a Kingdom founded on the Incarnation, represented in the world by the visible Church, having its life and power in individual hearts. The destruction of Jerusalem, which effectually closed the Jewish national history, was a marked epoch in its development. The second Coming to Judgment will be its grand consummation.

But why was the Transfiguration included among the features of this Kingdom? At first thought this seems to create a difficulty, but in reality it confirms our view.

That the Transfiguration is so included is evident. It is recorded by three of the four Evangelists, and is in each case immediately preceded by our Lord's assurance that there were "some" of the twelve disciples standing by Him who should not taste of death until they had seen "the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom," as St. Matthew gives it; or, as St. Mark, "the Kingdom of God come with power;" or, as St. Luke, "till they see the Kingdom of God."¹

In each case we are, in the very next sentence, told how Christ took "some" of them (three out of the number of the Twelve) to be witnesses of the glorious manifestation on the Mount. There they saw their Master "clothed upon" with a preternatural brightness, His human Body transfigured into a heavenly glory. There, by the presence of Moses and Elias, the representatives of the Law and the

¹ Cf. St. Matt. xvi. 28; St. Mark ix. 1; St. Luke ix. 27.

Prophets, who came to do Him homage, they were taught how former systems were henceforth to yield to His divine dynasty. They saw His Kingdom in the vision of that majesty in virtue of which He should wield it, namely, the glorification of His human nature through the inherent power of His Godhead. Peter and James and John were privileged to see beforehand His Kingdom coming in its power, not indeed in its actual working, but in that personal condition of their Lord which should be the cause and the signal of its commencement. They thus, as St. Peter testifies many years afterwards, "were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy Mount."¹

Thus the opening of the Kingdom of Heaven corresponds with the rising of "the man Christ Jesus" into the glory above. It was to this He looked forward, as He taught, during His earthly ministry. It was upon the exercise of this Kingship He entered, when, as, Daniel saw in the night-visions, "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a Kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."²

But if the teaching of our Lord during His active ministry leads us to look forward to His continual action, His appearances during the interval between His Resurrection

¹ 2 Pet. i. 16—18.

² Dan. vii. 13, 14.

and Ascension, as we might expect would be the case, more directly assert it. Of much that passed during those mysterious forty days we are, doubtless, uninformed. We know generally that He was seen of the disciples during this period "speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God :"¹ and we know, moreover, from one who obtained his information not from the evidence of men, but by direct communication from the Lord Himself, that two of the Apostles, who afterwards stood forth conspicuous as possessed of a recognised authority in the Church, St. Peter and St. James, were privileged to separate interviews.² This, whether or not it be deemed to justify the ancient opinion that St. Peter and St. James were then appointed by our Lord to special office in His behalf, affords an additional evidence of the loving care of the risen Saviour for His Church, and prepares us for the immediateness and directness of His supervision. We are told that Jesus was closely associated with His followers, and that He did many other signs in their presence besides those reported by St. John, a statement which seems to refer to more than the post-resurrection incidents spoken of by the other Evangelists and omitted by the beloved disciple.³ May not things which then occurred and words which were then spoken account for the calmness and complacency of the Eleven as He rises up from amongst them, and give a fuller meaning of benediction to His outspread hands?

Not that His recorded sayings are in any way deficient. His first appearance, to Mary Magdalene, though she may not touch the King, who is now entering on His Kingdom, with the former touch of human friendship, tells of com-

¹ Acts i. 3.

² 1 Cor. xv. 5—7. Cf. Luke xxiv. 34.

³ St. John xx. 30, 31.

munication to be resumed when He has ascended, and of a new and better contact, the contact of faith.¹

Now too, and later, He, for the first time, directly calls the disciples His "brethren,"² as if by His Ascension as man to Him of Whom He speaks as "My Father and your Father, and My God and your God," a new tie begins to be established between them, and He becomes the connecting link between God and man, living henceforth for blessing and for life to those whom He leaves behind.

To the women who hold His feet and worship Him, His first word is of joy for them.³

To the two disciples on the way to Emmaus He points out how the Christ's earthly sufferings were preparatory to His state of glory, and signifies, ere He leaves them, the great means by which communion with Himself is henceforth to be maintained.⁴

When He appears the same night to the Apostles through the closed doors of the upper room, it is to speak the word of peace, and, having satisfied their doubts and removed their fears, to breathe on them a gift proceeding from Himself, in preparation for a work they are shortly to enter upon, and in which He Himself is throughout all time to be participant.⁵

A week later and, when the doubting Thomas is convinced, a promise of blessing is made to all those who should believe hereafter without seeing, and so hold communion with an ever-living Lord.⁶

The meeting by the Sea of Tiberias (when in the net

¹ St. John xx. 17.

² Verse 17; St. Matt. xxviii. 10.

³ St. Matt. xxviii. 9. *Xalpere.*

⁴ St. Luke xxiv. 13—35.

⁵ St. Luke xxiv. 36—48. St. John xx. 19—23.

⁶ St. John xx. 26—29.

cast into the sea again at His bidding, Jesus gave His disciples an earnest of their future success as fishers of men, and of His word as the cause of it) implies throughout the permanent connection which is to exist between Himself and His servants in years to come. The sheep and lambs, which He charges Simon, as He loves Him, to feed, will be still His though He be gone. His own will is to be the disposing power in the affairs of the world. Obedience to Himself as a leader whose commands are to be followed is an abiding duty.¹

But clearest of all is the great promise.² On the mountain of Galilee Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and in earth." In Heaven and in earth is His power as man to be henceforth exercised, His reign forthwith to commence. "Therefore" He gives them their commission and authority to act in His name, to make disciples of all nations, admitting them by a sacrament into membership with Himself.

And as long as the work lasts He will be present with it. "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

IV.

"IT IS I MYSELF."

THERE is another truth which our risen Lord also takes pains to make clear, and which we must ever carry in our minds, if we would arrive at Scriptural notions of His present work. This is His strict personal identity; the fact that He who rose from the grave and ascended

¹ St. John xxi.

² St. Matt. xxviii. 16—20.

into Heaven is the very Jesus who lived a human life among men and who died on the Cross. It is because He is still Jesus, that we are "saved by His Life."

To say this is, at first thought, superfluous. No Christian of these days denies so obvious a truth in so many words. Yet there is a wide-spread tendency among us to create a mist, or, let us rather say, to throw a confusing halo round the Person of the living Saviour. People who would shrink in horror from reproducing the ancient heresy which makes Christ a mere phantom, or that which supposes that on His exaltation His Divine Glory extinguished His Humanity, are apt so to spiritualize the conditions of His continued Manhood that they practically make it to disappear from their religious system. They thus lose the key to clear thought of His Mediatorial office. While, "looking to Jesus" as He sits enthroned above, we exclaim with St. Thomas, "My Lord and my God!" we must, with St. Thomas, keep in sight the nail-printed hands and the spear-pierced side.¹

¹ The tendency referred to may be accounted for in part by the omissions of divines of our Church who undoubtedly hold the true doctrine. Roman Catholic writers with their views of the corporal Presence, and Lutherans with their inclination, more or less, to ubiquitarianism or the omnipresence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood, dwell, as might be expected, almost exclusively on the majestic and mysterious character of our Lord's risen and ascended Person. It becomes easier to conceive of fleshly Presence when the mind is accustomed to exaggerate the difference between the bodily condition of Christ during His earthly life and that condition which His Body assumed between the Resurrection and Ascension. If in this period it was undergoing some substantial change to be further developed on His disappearance, the way for these respective beliefs is, in some degree, prepared. But the deficiency of our English theologians adequately to insist on the point, is, at first thought, less easy to be accounted for. Keen as they were in combating the dogma of a material Presence (whether by Transubstantiation or Consubstantia-

No one can need to be reminded that the Ascension must of necessity be the Ascension of a man. As God, Christ could not be said to ascend at all. "As God, He was never so present on earth as not to be present in Heaven: and never so present in Heaven as not to be present on earth"¹ Thus, sitting with Nicodemus on a certain night in a human dwelling, He tells him that He is at that moment in Heaven. As to His natural Body, He is, as Nicodemus sees, locally present in Jerusalem. As to His eternal Godhead, He, the Son of Man, is "in Heaven."²

Our ascended Lord is truly God, but He is not ascended as God. In the words of good Bishop Beveridge, "Though not as God, yet He that is God as well as man, in that nature wherein He was man as well as God, was truly and locally translated."

This is no theological refinement, but truth most necessary and most practical. As Christ rose, so did He ascend. We find Him therefore most earnestly insisting on His perfect

tion) and aware (as the note added to the Rubric at the end of the Communion Office shows) of the controversial value of the bodily Presence of our Lord at the right hand of God, they nevertheless omit to follow out the theme as they might be expected to do. A probable explanation is that their efforts were chiefly directed to the vindication of the Deity of Christ, which was the great point of attack by unbelievers in their time. His real and abiding Manhood was less touched upon because it was regarded as a truth safe from all question. And it may be that, in their honest eagerness to make the most of each Scriptural point which tends to confirm the doctrine of Christ's Godhead, they overlooked the bearing of certain passages on the post-resurrection verity of His lower nature, and insisted on illustrations of His Divine Majesty, where they should have marked how, amid His dawning glory, He Himself carefully asserts His continuance as Man.

¹ Cf. Bishop Beveridge, Article IV. Works, vol. vii. p. 158.

² St. John iii. 13.

sameness, soul and body, after His Resurrection. "He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs."¹ His Apostles saw Him eat and drink. They heard Him speak as He had spoken before. They saw Him with their eyes : they looked upon Him, and their hands handled Him.²

He had previously said of His body, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."³ He had given to the Jews the sign of the prophet Jonas, which involved His literal return after three days and three nights from the heart of the earth.⁴ And now He says, as He stands in the upper room, "It is I Myself."⁵ It is the same Jesus, the same 'I,' with the same sympathies, memories, and affections as before : the same human soul in the same human body. Behold My hands and My feet, still marked with the print of the nails. Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into My side opened by that cruel wound. Handle Me and see. Touch and feel Me to be real. You took Me for a spirit. But I am no spirit, no mere apparition ; no shadowy form from the world unseen. A spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have."

All this is so plain, that, but for our disposition to over-spiritualize referred to above, there would be no occasion to dwell on it. For the Apostles, in their perplexity and as yet unenlightened state, such demonstration was needed : but Christians surely ought not to require to be reminded of truth so certain.

How is it, then, that we find ourselves so continually laying stress on the difference which appears in the risen Christ, or on alleged occasional failures of those to whom

¹ Acts i. 3.

² St. Luke xxiv. 39 ; 1 St. John i. 1.

³ St. John ii. 19.

⁴ St. Matt. xii. 40.

⁵ St. Luke xxiv. 39.

He appeared to recognise Him at once? Why do writers, who admit the doctrine in terms, seem to be eager to lay hold on anything which tends to obscure the strict identity of His glorified body?

That together with perfect sameness there was a difference of some sort about our Lord's Person during the Forty Days is not to be denied. He was no longer the Man of Sorrows; no longer subject to human needs and human weaknesses, no longer liable to be hungry, thirsty, weary. "A glory rests upon Him. A mystery enshrouds Him. A new mode of life is revealed in Him."

It is usual to call this difference "a change," an expression which leads to misapprehension in some pious minds. But, if a change took place, it was a change only of the conditions under which Christ was pleased to abide, and not a substantial change in His sacred Person.

His Body was freed from the ordinary laws which regulate matter. He vanished suddenly out of the sight of the two disciples at Emmaus. He twice appeared among the Apostles in the upper room when the doors were shut.

But He had made Himself invisible at will during His earthly ministry. He had passed unseen through the Jews, who took up stones to cast at Him in the Temple. After He had allowed Himself to be thrust out of the synagogue at Nazareth, He mysteriously passed through the midst of the men who sought to cast Him from the brow of the hill on which the city was built.¹

His coming through closed doors shows no more marked superiority to natural laws than did the miraculous transference of His Presence from the other side of Tiberias to

¹ St. John viii. 59; St. Luke iv. 28—30.

the synagogue at Capernaum, or His coming to the disciples in the storm walking upon the waves.¹ In the latter case, it will be remembered, St. Peter was enabled, so long as his faith held out, to do the like, a fact which affords additional proof that such miracle is by no means inconsistent with the truth of a natural body. In the Temptation, too, and at the Transfiguration, we, who hold these to be real events and not mere allegory in the one instance and vision in the other, again see supernatural motion and supernatural glory communicated to Christ's Body, while no substantial change takes place in that Body itself.

In fact, we have more record of the supernatural exhibited in Christ's Person during His earthly ministry than we have during the interval between His Resurrection and Ascension. The difference lies in this, that during the earthly ministry the natural is the rule, afterwards it becomes, apparently, the exception. Before His departure the Lord is pleased to make that habitual which before was occasional only, and that occasional which before was habitual. But each was altogether voluntary. There is nothing in His new condition which is inconsistent with His former self. His partaking of the broiled fish and the honeycomb on His first appearance to the assembled disciples, and His eating and drinking with them, as He appears to have done, when He bade them "Come and dine" on the sea-shore of Tiberias, are evidence of this.² As has been well said, "He ate not because He had need of food for the body, but because we have need of faith for the soul."³ He thus teaches us that the faith we need is not

¹ St. John vi. 22—25 ; St. Matt. xiv. 23—33.

² St. Luke xxiv. 42 ; St. John xxi. 12.

³ Bp. Wordsworth on St. Luke xxiv. 43.

only faith in His Divine nature, but faith in His continuance still in the true nature of Man.

As to the stress which is sometimes laid on such a change having taken place in our risen Saviour that He was no longer necessarily to be recognised, it must be remembered that when this opinion is entertained by some ancient Fathers as well as by divines of our own Church, it is taken for granted that such change was the result of a superadded glory, of a "clothing upon" of the Man Christ Jesus with the partial radiancy of His Godhead, and not of any abandonment of His strict personal identity. At the same time it is humbly submitted that we are apt to exaggerate the Gospel statements on this point.

In seven out of eleven post-resurrection appearances of Christ there is no ground whatever for questioning His immediate recognition by those to whom He presented Himself.

Early on the Easter morning the women who meet Him as they are running, at the angels' bidding, with fear and great joy, to bring the disciples word that He is risen,¹ hold Him by the feet and worship. What they did proves that they knew Him at once. Doubtless they showed signs of fear and of the awe which the sight of One whom they had so lately seen lying dead, and whose Body they had just come to embalm, would naturally awaken; for Jesus bids them, "Be not afraid." This, however, would by no means involve their mistaking Him for some one else. Nay, His words which follow distinctly suggest the contrary; "Go," He says, "tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me;" not, "There shall they gather the fact of My Resurrection;"

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.

not, "There will I make Myself manifest to them, and convince them that this new form is that of their risen Master;" but, "There shall they see Me. There shall their eyes be blessed with the sight of My familiar Self."

It is twice briefly mentioned that He was "seen of Cephas:" the word employed, and emphatically repeated by St. Paul, signifying sight with the outward eye.¹

On the eighth day from the Resurrection, the second or those "first days of the week" which were distinguished by His appearances, Christ came again through the closed doors. On this occasion He was recognised at once: and not only so, but because the previous doubt of St. Thomas had been concerning the fleshly reality of His body, He allowed that Apostle to satisfy himself by tracing upon it the very marks of His Passion. St. Thomas believed because "he saw."²

It is probable that the meeting appointed by our Lord, through the women, for the mountain of Galilee (not, be it remembered, the mountain of the Ascension which was above Bethany in Judea), included not only the Eleven Apostles, but the five hundred brethren who, as St. Paul tells us, were privileged to see Him at once. If so, St. Matthew's account of their behaviour is easily understood. "When they saw Him, they (the Eleven) worshipped Him; but some (of the five hundred) doubted."³ But in any case the passing doubt may have been that of fear at the mysteriousness of the meeting: or the old doubt of the reality of the body whose appearance they recognised, may have suggested itself: or it may have been the doubt of imperfect vision, as they beheld Him in the distance; for we

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 34; 1 Cor. xv. 5. ὁφθῆ.

² St. John xx. 24—29.

³ St. Matt. xxviii. 16, 17.

find Jesus approaching to speak to them. That which He spoke took for granted absolute recognition on the part of those whom He addressed. There is no hint given here of any change in Christ.

Of His being seen by St. James we have only the bare mention. At the Ascension all the Apostles saw and heard Him in a prolonged and doubt-free interview.

Let us now examine the supposed exceptions. Among these it is strange that His first appearance to the Apostles on the evening of the day on which He arose should ever be included.¹ Their alarm when He entered the upper chamber needs no theory of transformation to account for it. "They were terrified and affrighted, supposing that they had seen a spirit." It was not because He looked different, but because, after His death and burial, He came back looking the same. A similar fear had seized them when He came about the fourth watch of the night, walking upon the waves of Gennesareth. It is described almost in the same words: "They supposed it had been a spirit, and cried out." In each case it is the unexpectedness and wonderful manner of the appearance which occasions the fear. No one supposes that He assumed any strange form when He came on the sea, a circumstance which occurred early in His ministry, and while He was living, as to bodily habit, the daily life of an ordinary man.

It is clear that in the upper room it was His reality and not His identity of which the Apostles at first doubted; and it is to proof of the former that our Lord chiefly addresses Himself. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord;" when they found it was no phantom wearing His image, but His very Self.

¹ St. Luke xxiv. 36; St. Mark xvi. 14; St. John xx. 19.

Mary Magdalene, to whom He first appeared, did not at once recognise Him. She supposed it had been the gardener. Hence it is assumed that He wore a glorious form on His Resurrection; and that, lest the sorrowing woman should be overcome by its majesty, He took the shape of the man who had charge of the grounds in which the sepulchre lay.

This notion is derived from St. John's account. St. Mark refers to the interview without any hint of change in Christ.¹ But let us look to the sacred text more closely.² Mary stands without at the sepulchre, weeping. She had come early, when it was yet dark, had seen the stone rolled away, and had called St. Peter and St. John. These two, having satisfied themselves that the body of Jesus was no longer there, had gone away again to their own home. But Mary, overcome with grief, remains behind. Presently, as she weeps she stoops down and looks into the sepulchre. She sees two angels in white, sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the Body of Jesus had lain. They inquire, "Woman, why weepest thou?" She piteously replies, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." As she thus speaks she becomes aware that some one is approaching behind her. So she "turns herself back," those eyes swollen with long weeping and clouded with present tears; and, scarce glancing at the new comer, concludes it must be the gardener, who alone is likely to be about at that early hour. Certain it seems that she speaks to Him (in answer to His inquiry, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?") *with her back turned towards Him*. For when Jesus again speaks, and her own name "Mary!"

¹ St. Mark xvi. 9—11.

² St. John xx. 11—18.

in His well-known tones thrills in her ears, she "*turned herself*." Then, looking full at Him, she knows Him at once, and with the cry, "Rabboni," seeks to fling herself at His feet. He is evidently the same. The feet she would now clasp are those which she had clasped and kissed before. Would she have thus hastened to embrace a person which seemed to be that of a common and strange man? Even if her faith assured her, spite of the evidence of her senses, that it was Christ under another form, she would scarcely have felt the immediate impulse thus to approach Him. That she made the attempt is clear from our Lord's words "Touch Me not."

These words of themselves strengthen the view that Christ stood unchanged before her eyes.

He who had permitted this woman to touch Him when people around murmured and disciples were perplexed; He who suffered her approach when she was yet "a sinner" possessed by a sevenfold power of evil, refuses the prompting of her affection now;—"Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended." Wherefore is this? Not because He is outwardly different, but because He is to outward eye the same: because, since He looks the same, Mary has not yet learnt that He is to be differently regarded. His Resurrection has wrought a change in the relation existing between them, of which she is at present unaware. The loved Teacher and Master of earth is now on His way to Heaven. He is no longer to be touched as she would fain touch Him, that is, with a devoted and respectful human love. Only one mode of touching Him as an object of regard is henceforth to be vouchsafed, a mode which after the Ascension she, in common with all true believers, is to enjoy. This could not be now, in that He is not yet ascended.

That our Blessed Lord could be touched, and that He was touched after His Resurrection, we know. St. Thomas touched Him. The Apostles generally "handled" Him. Even Mary Magdalene herself, within a few minutes of her being thus forbidden, was allowed, when she met Him with the other women, to hold Him by the feet.¹ There is no contradiction here. At the first interview she had learned that which she needed to learn. She now approaches Him, not with the eager impulse of a yearning love, but with a calm and reverent devotion. So she too "held Him by the feet and worshipped."

On the whole, if the Saviour had assumed the appearance of the gardener, Mary would not, we may believe, from a mere womanly instinct, have been so eager to touch Him. Had He, as some seem to think was the case, suddenly changed Himself back from the gardener into a glorious Resurrection form which He had put aside for the moment, awe at His majesty would equally have restrained her. To suppose three different appearances in a brief space—first the Resurrection brightness; then, to veil this, the gardener's humble guise; and thirdly, just as Mary turns, His accustomed Self—is altogether unwarranted. But if the Lord came looking and continuing to look as she had known Him all along, the whole account is clear. At first, as she scarce regards the supposed gardener and so little expects it can be He, she fails to acknowledge His presence; but, roused by His mention of her name, she sees Him as she had seen Him so often before, and, with a passionate cry, would spring forward to embrace Him.

A single expression used by St. Mark seems to convey to us the fact that, in one instance, Christ did assume a strange

¹ St. Matt. xxviii. 9.

shape for a special purpose. We are told, of the incident on the way to Emmaus, that "He appeared in another form unto two of them as they walked and went into the country."¹ But, comparing St. Luke, we find that although when "Jesus Himself drew near" "they knew Him not," the inability of the two disciples to recognise Him arose not from any change in Him, but from an influence brought to bear upon themselves. "Their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."² And when He manifested Himself to them "in the breaking of bread," we are not told of a sudden return to His proper shape ere He vanished out of their sight, but that "their eyes were opened, and they knew Him." A restraining influence is in the first instance laid upon them: afterwards it is suddenly withdrawn. There is a twofold interference, which would have been unnecessary in infliction, and useless in removal, had Christ worn a form which was other than that which the disciples would at once recognise. It is most probable that when St. Mark speaks of "another form," he simply speaks of what seemed to be another form to Cleopas and his companion, owing to the influence which was put upon them.

One more appearance remains to be considered. It is that to seven of the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias.³ They had toiled in vain all night at their fishers' trade. Suddenly, in the dim morning light, a figure is seen standing on the shore about a hundred yards distant.⁴ "The disciples knew not that it was Jesus." They had little expectation of seeing Him at such a place and at such a time. They might look for Him in the upper room as they met for prayer, but now they are working

¹ St. Mark xvi. 12. ² St. Luke xxiv. 16. ³ St. John xxi.

⁴ St. John xxi. 8, "as it were two hundred cubits."

at their ordinary calling. The uncertain light and the distance at which He stood from them, perhaps too their own attention to the work they were engaged in, would account for their failure to recognise Him at first, even though He hails them and they reply. But a miracle which follows at His word flashes conviction into the mind of St. John. "It is the Lord," he exclaims. It must be He! Simon, hearing it is the Lord, but as yet unable to distinguish Him, in eager haste girds his fisher's coat about him, and leaps into the water to join Him. Yet, on the arrival of His companions dragging the net, now full of great fishes, to the shore, and during the mysterious feast which was found ready prepared, there was an awe upon them all which at first restrained them from familiar speech. "None of them durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord."

Nothing is said of any change in the Redeemer's appearance; and surely such a supposition is unnecessary for understanding their hesitation. There is no need to go on multiplying miracles. They feel sure that their eyes do not deceive them, but His presence there is so strange that they long for some positive word from His mouth, such as He had given them before, when He said "It is I Myself." The evidence of their senses is not enough under circumstances of such mystery. They fear lest somehow the whole thing should be an illusion. Yet they dare not ask for the satisfaction they crave on account of its obvious superfluity. This interpretation is confirmed by what follows. In a short time their confidence returns. St. Peter converses with Him with almost his former freedom. We are not told, however, of any return of Christ into His wonted Self. Yet an appeal to St. Peter's affection towards His

Person is made and responded to with all the warmth of their previous friendship. The disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast at the Last Supper still follows close, as to the same Jesus. Surely they must have seen their very own Lord before them, and not some stranger whom they merely understood to represent Him. Wonderful, indeed, would be the faith which, having slowly accepted the reality of His Resurrection on the evidence of His strict identity even to definite marks, could now all at once transfer the near attachment conceived for His sacred Person to a new and different manifestation of His Presence. Even if reasonable conviction were thus wrought, the instinct of affection would be most unlikely to return. It would be against human nature; and Pentecostal grace had not yet been given to raise human nature above itself.

Added to this, St. John classes this appearance with two others without any hint of a variation so important. "This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after that He was risen from the dead;"¹ that is, it was the third time that He showed Himself to His disciples in company together. The two former occasions were those on successive Lord's days in the upper chamber. But on each of these He not only came the very same, but took pains to show that He was the very same. The three interviews would scarcely be thus connected had there been such wide difference between the third and the former two, as a new or unrecognisable form involves.

¹ St. John xxi. 14.

V.

"ALIVE FOR EVERMORE."

WHETHER our conclusions in the preceding chapter be sound or otherwise, whatever degree of mystery may have attended our Blessed Lord in His various appearances after His Resurrection, and whatever may have been the effect of dawning glory on His sacred Person, it is certain that the disciples, sooner or later, knew Him to be as truly Man as when He lived an unquestioned earthly life, and that they saw Him, still Man, ascend from amongst them. Their eyes followed Him into the cloud, and their last view included the pierced hands spread out in the act of blessing. That He is to return the same Jesus, angels came at once to declare. When He cometh with clouds they who pierced Him shall recognise the marks of the wounds they inflicted. Unless, then, we suppose a second Incarnation is to take place, and that, as some early heretics fancied,¹ Christ laid aside His Humanity, as He passed upwards, to resume it again for the Judgment Day, we must believe that as He "rose again after death and took again His Body with flesh, bones, and all things pertaining to the perfection of man's nature," so He "ascended into Heaven and there sitteth until He return to judge all men at the last day."²

¹ Some of these held that Christ left His body dissolved in the air, and so ascended to Heaven without it : others that He left it in the sun : others again that it lies useless on the floor of Heaven, "devoid of Himself, like an empty scabbard." (See note, Pearson on the Creed, vol. vi., where authorities for the existence of "these wild heresies" are given.)

² See Article IV. The Latin rendered "to the perfection of man's nature" is, "*ad integritatem humanæ naturæ*," i.e. to the completeness, so

Nay, He has been seen by some since His return to glory. St. Stephen before the Sanhedrim could exclaim, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God."¹

It is sometimes said that this was a spiritual impression only, produced on St. Stephen's mind, and not sight with the bodily eye. But it is spoken as if it were sober fact, and is mentioned as a fact by the sacred writer independently of the exclamation of St. Stephen himself. It was a view of Christ real enough to make the martyr Christ-like in his dying prayer, and to change a painful death into a peaceful falling asleep. Suppose it, however, to have been a spiritual vision only, was it a vision of that which really was, or of something which was not? However we may suppose that this sight was vouchsafed (and we have no ground whatever for questioning the literal statement), we cannot suppose, without holding that which reverence forbids our putting into words, that what Stephen saw by the agency of the Spirit of Truth was otherwise than true, or that Jesus was not really there, "the Son of Man" in His true human nature, as Stephen declared that he saw Him.

St. Paul, too, distinctly tells us that he saw Christ after His Ascension, and he classes his own sight of Him with that of Cephas and James and all the Apostles and brethren during the forty days.² He could say, "Have I not seen the Lord Jesus Christ?"³ with as literal accuracy as they who had known Him during His earthly life, and did "eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."

There is no reason why we should suppose, amid the that no part be wanting. No reference is here made, as some have suggested, to a future perfect development of the body in glory.

¹ Acts vii. 54-60.

² I Cor. xv. 8.

³ I Cor. ix. 1.

abundance of revelations vouchsafed to him, that Paul's sight of his Lord was confined to the occasion of his conversion on the road to Damascus.¹ But the reality of that appearance is certain. If it be said that the narrative is not to be taken literally, and that St. Paul, deluded by strong feeling, might have supposed himself to see, when really, amid certain "outward phenomena," he was only "made inwardly sensible" of the Presence of Christ, there are two things yet to be accounted for. We are told that the men who journeyed with him "heard a voice, but saw no man." It is clearly inferred, therefore, that the seeing (which was by St. Paul) was equally real with their hearing; and this hearing is positively recorded.² Again: the fact that Saul *saw* Christ was communicated by Christ Himself "in a vision" to Ananias. He is thus able to say to Saul, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who *appeared* unto thee by the way," and "The God of our fathers hath chosen thee that thou shouldest *see* that Just One and shouldest hear the voice of His mouth."

And how did the Lord reveal Himself? Not as the Eternal Son of God, but as "Jesus," "Jesus of Nazareth," the same who suffered and died, still one in sympathy with the brethren He has left on earth. "I am Jesus of Nazareth, Whom thou persecutest."

¹ Acts ix. 1—20; xxii. 5—16; xxvi. 12—18.

² It is true that elsewhere (Acts xxii. 9) St. Paul says, according to our translation, "They that were with me saw indeed the light and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake unto me." But there is a noticeable difference in the Greek. In one case it is *ἀκούοντες τῆς φωνῆς*, in the other *φωνὴν οὐκ ἤκουσαν*. The genitive is used of the *sound* only: the accusative of understanding the voice's articulate utterance. The men with Saul heard the former, but could not comprehend the latter. See Bp. Wordsworth on Acts ix.

Even in the glorious vision of the Apocalypse His identity is preserved.¹ He that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks is "One like unto the Son of Man." Amid the wonders of His appearance, He touches the trembling St. John with the touch of a human hand. The very imagery under which His glory is described, preserves the idea of His human nature. The supernatural brightness, the burning splendour, the awful music of His speech, the direct symbols of His power, the sunshine brilliancy of His Presence, are all connected with portions of a human form, and remind us how He who is alive for evermore is none other than He that died.

But we must pause once more.

Some obscure the truth of Christ's natural Body in Heaven on the strength of their interpretation of St. Paul's teaching in the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. From this they come to the conclusion that our own bodies, though in some sense they may be called the same, will not be the same in the close sense which the Church attributes to Christ's glorified Body. Therefore, since our bodies are to be like Christ's, they infer that Christ's cannot be as is represented.

It need scarcely be remarked that such reasoning is a direct inversion of the Scriptural method. The New Testament professedly leaves the future glory of the human body uncertain and dependent on the glory of Christ's Body. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but this we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."² And St. Paul himself speaks of Christ "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body."³ It seems strange,

¹ Rev. i. 13—18.

² 1 St. John iii. 2.

³ Phil. iii. 21.

then, to argue, "We are hereafter to be like Christ, whatever He may be since He disappeared in the cloud. Therefore Christ must be like that which is hinted about us;" and this at the risk of at least seeming to contradict what has been actually told us about Christ Himself as far as it goes.

The first point relied upon is St. Paul's distinction between the natural body and the spiritual body. Our body "is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."¹ There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."² But St. Paul does not speak of two bodies, one natural, the other spiritual. He simply says, There is a body living a natural life; there is also a body living a spiritual life. At one time it is subject to natural laws, requiring natural support, performing natural functions; at another time it is freed from these and living a spiritual existence.

His whole argument requires the continuance of the same body under different conditions: now "corruptible," afterwards "incorruptible;" now "in dishonour," then "in glory;" now "in weakness," then "in power;" now in a natural state, then in a spiritual state. True he says "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption," that is, flesh and blood in their natural state cannot enter Heaven to live a natural life such as flesh and blood lives on earth.³ Corruption and decay cannot be

¹ v. 44. *Σπείρεται σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἐγείρεται σῶμα πνευματικόν.*

² Some MSS. read, *Εἰ ἔστιν σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἔστιν καὶ πνευματικόν.* "If there is a body living a natural life, there is also one living a spiritual life," i.e. the spiritual life of the body above is the necessary sequel to the natural life of the body here.

³ . . . "It is plain that the Apostle did not deny that there will be the substance of flesh in the Kingdom of God: but either called men who were after the flesh, 'flesh and blood,' or the *corruption* of the flesh itself, which then surely will be no more. For when he had said, 'Flesh and

there. But flesh and blood shall exchange its natural state for a new and spiritual state. It is not that a new and different incorruptible body shall be given us in exchange for this present corruptible body ; but this "corruptible shall put on incorruption." A new glory and the power to live a new life will be given to it.

But more stress is laid on the analogy set up by St. Paul between the resurrection of the body and the reproduction of a plant from the seed which decays in the earth.¹ Hence it is inferred that the resurrection body is not the very same body as the earthy, but that it springs from the body sown in the ground as the plant springs from its seed, and is the same only in the sense in which the plant is the same as the seed, being the seed in a developed state.

This is in part true, but the argument from analogy must not be pressed too far. Its strength lies in supplying answer to objections. It fails when the attempt is made to treat it as constructive. St. Paul's reasoning is, of course, sound as far as it goes, but it is not intended to afford a scientific representation of the process of Resurrection. Indeed his comparison, if closely worked out, instead of magnifying the difference in the condition of our present and future bodies, would actually reduce it.

But St. Paul does not profess to give any representation

blood shall not inherit the Kingdom of God,' it is right to understand him as having added for explanation what follows directly : Neither shall corruption inherit incorruption" St. Augustine, "Retract." i. 17, quoted in preface to "De Fide et Symbolo" (Libr. of Fathers), where he protests against a sense attached to some former expressions of his on this subject, which represented him as holding "that the earthly body, such as we have seen, is in resurrection so changed into a heavenly body, as that there will be no limbs or substance of flesh."

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 35—38.

whatever of that which he elsewhere teaches is reserved for future discovery. He simply meets a supposed objector on his own ground. He makes him ask, not as seeking information, but as suggesting doubt, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come? How can the dead live again, and how can they who have died resume that body which becomes corrupt and is mingled with the earth? Is not death extinction, corruption the certain prelude to annihilation?"

The Apostle replies: "You yourself see in the world of nature how a corresponding miracle takes place. 'That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.' Its death does not extinguish the seed; in death it is again made alive. So shall it be with the body."

"Further, you object to the possibility of the body once degraded reappearing in glory. Does not the seed which lies in decay reappear in a new and full life? Does not a glory come upon it in blade and stalk and fruitful ear? Wherefore, then, may not flesh once corrupted in the dust of the earth rise up again to splendour by the power of the same God who orders alike the course of nature and the miracles of the New Creation?"

He does not put it with mathematical precision, "As the new plant is to the seed, so is the risen body to the earthy body;" but rather thus: "As plants may spring from seed, wherefore may not living bodies from dead bodies? Do not the very things you gaze upon year after year preach to you of a Divine purpose and a Divine power?"

His very word of reproach, "Thou fool!" suggests the limit of his argument. The man supposed would be foolish and devoid of proper observation in failing to see how the annual resurrection of Nature marks the existence of a

Divine power sufficient to raise the dead ; but he would not be foolish in failing to see how the springing up of the grain from sown seed marks the precise relation which the risen body shall bear to the present body, and the degree in which its identity shall be preserved.

Carried beyond the point indicated above as the limit of St. Paul's intention, the comparison seems to fail. One is a natural process, the other a supernatural. It cannot be said, "As the furrow is by God's appointment to the wheat, so is the grave to the flesh." Year by year, by a law of God which we call Nature, the seed acted upon by the soil in which it lies rises into a new life. But our bodies would lie dead and mingled with the earth for ever, but for the special voice of the Son of God once only to be heard. Certainly St. Paul does not mean to teach us that there is by God's appointment a natural tendency in the grave to forward the development of our bodies, or in the corrupt human frame to reproduce itself in a new and glorious form.

The analogy clearly does not illustrate the process ; wherefore, then, should it be supposed to give the measure of the precise result ?

Again : the argument in this place of objectors against the strict identity of the Resurrection body is this. As the new plant is to the seed, so will the Resurrection body be to the present earthy body. But properly it should be, "As the new plant is to the seed, so will the Resurrection body be to the body which is decayed in the earth."

We do not sow the original plant, but the seed. The new plant is more glorious than the seed : but it is not more glorious than the previous plant which the seed represents.

We do not sow for the production of a far superior plant, but for the same. Were the analogy to be strictly carried out it would teach us, not that our future bodies will be more excellent than our present ones, but that after going through a process of dishonour and decay in death, they shall spring up again to exactly the same life and beauty with which they are now clothed. Instead of proving too much and showing that our resurrection bodies will be new bodies of a superior type, with only a remote connection with our present bodies, St. Paul's illustration, if it were intended to show anything on the subject, would show too little, and represent the bodies of the future as mere reproductions of the present.

In what follows he takes for granted the risen body's sameness. He shows that as there are different kinds of flesh, so flesh may exist in varying grades of excellence, and in varying degrees of glory.¹ The flesh of men, of beasts, of fishes, and of birds, is each suited to its particular mode of existence. So the flesh of man now suited to this natural life may hereafter be adapted to a spiritual life. As God has made the heavenly bodies each with its own degree of brilliancy, so can He make the same body to differ hereafter in glory from that which it is now, its present lesser honour being changed into the radiancy of a heavenly life. His language throughout is inconsistent with any kind of substitution. The change he speaks of is a change coming upon these very bodies, the corruptible clothed with incorruption, the mortal with immortality.

We need not dwell on the obvious contradiction which a theory of substantial change presents to the teaching of Holy Scripture in other places. Resurrections which have

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 39—41.

already occurred mark the sameness we are contending for. If Old Testament risings be deemed exceptional, and Old Testament prophecies doubtful, our Lord's own miracles must surely be intended to teach us. The hand of the damsel which Jesus took in His own grew warm again with life. The same young man rose from the bier at the gate of Nain. But the raising of Lazarus is stronger still. It was then that our Lord proclaimed Himself the Resurrection and the Life, and displayed that power which should ultimately embrace all mankind. And lo! the work of death is repaired in a moment; the grave-clothes are unwound from a body, and the napkin removed from a face, which had presented the usual symptoms and borne the actual marks of decay.

It may be remarked that the idea of "a new body of finer and more ethereal texture" applies to the accepted of God only, and leaves out the resurrection of the wicked. Are the wicked to rise with the same bodies and the saints with different ones? How, too, about the recognition of each other in Heaven, a belief so comforting to us all? How about sitting down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, if their bodily identity is to be forever obliterated? And how, as good Bishop Pearson points out, would it be with God's servants who shall be alive and remain when Christ comes again to gather in His own? They are to be caught up in the clouds, as they are, to meet the Lord in the air. Must not the dead who rise out of the dust with which they are mingled, or out of the sea in whose depths their particles have been dissolved, rise also to join them in the bodies in which they lived? "Otherwise the saints which shall be with God and with the Lamb for evermore would be chequered with a strange disparity, one

part of them appearing and continuing with the same bodies in which they lived, another part with others."¹

But we must not here enter on a defence of the Article of our Creed, "I believe in the Resurrection of the Body." Enough, it is hoped, has been said to show that the teaching of St. Paul does not and could not encourage that line of thought which would cast doubt on the identity of Christ's ascended Body from a revelation of the future of our own. There is nothing in his writings or any other part of Scripture which, rightly viewed, can be held to contradict our Blessed Lord's assertion, "It is I Myself; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have;" or which reflects adversely on the presence of His natural Body in the heavenly Kingdom, where, as Jesus Who died, He is "alive for evermore."

At the same time, in thus asserting His present Manhood we do not lose sight of His Divine glory. The nature of that glory is one of those things which the heart of man cannot conceive: but the principle, so to speak, of Christ's glorification is revealed to us. It is a glory irradiating, but not superseding or absorbing, His Humanity: a glory with which His natural body is "clothed upon," such, only in higher measure, as that which for a brief space rested upon Him and shone out of Him when He was transfigured before the three disciples on the Mount, and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. While raising our eyes to the Man who sits at the right hand on high, we can never forget to acknowledge "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ: Thou art the Everlasting Son of the Father."

¹ Bp. Pearson on the Creed, Art. XI. pp. 454-5.

VI.

MEDIATION.

WE shall see, as we proceed, how essential it is to any clear view of our Blessed Lord's present work that we carry with us the truth of His abiding Manhood. Indeed we may reverently believe that it was in great measure with an eye to this that He took so much pains (as we should call it among ourselves) to place the reality of His ascending Manhood beyond all possibility of doubt. That which He is for us and towards us in Heaven, as well as that which He did for us upon earth, depends on His character as the one Mediator between God and man; and to this Mediatorship His Manhood is, by Divine appointment, a necessity.

"There is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."¹

What do we mean by a "Mediator"?

It may be we have fallen into loose ways of thinking on this subject. If asked how Christ is our Mediator, we might reply, By dying for us on the Cross. This is true, but it is not a true answer to the question. Indeed it is only a part of the truth, and expresses not how Christ is our Mediator, but the one great way in which, being Mediator, He acted as such.

Let us go back to the meaning of the word.

I suppose that some such explanation of it as the following will be deemed satisfactory.

A Mediator is one who stands in the midst. He is one

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

who interferes as an equal friend between two parties as being qualified by this relation to each to be the medium of communication between them, and so to bring them together.¹

We need not dwell on the old sad tale. The very word sends back our thoughts to Eden, and to man made "very good," happy in the enjoyment of God's Presence and in the manifestation of His love. Then a dark cloud gathers round. Evil comes in to break the blessed harmony. In the guilt of sin and in the misery of a disordered nature, consciousness of alienation from God sets in. It needs no flaming sword of the Cherubim to tell man that the way of the Tree of Life is henceforth barred. Our own experience confirms the Scripture record. Even such as regard the history of the Fall as but a parable of spiritual fact, know the fact to be real: while to us, who cling to the old faith in Genesis, all comes home with fullest power. We lose nothing of the inward idea, to say the least, by believing that Tigris issues from the scene of man's first but now obliterated home, and that "the great river, the river Euphrates," once washed the bounds of the garden of the Lord.

Sin has sunk a gulf between the Creator and His creatures. A fearful penalty has been incurred. The poison of evil has impregnated man's very nature.

To remedy this state of things, and to join man to God, the scheme of Mediation was ordained.

First: the Son of God became Man.

He thus qualified Himself to act as Mediator. He touched God, as it were, from all eternity, being one with the Father, very God of very God. He qualified Himself to touch men by Himself becoming one of them. He took Manhood

¹ Compare the complaint of Job: "Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." (Job ix. 33.)

into God ; was "made" man, and so became the connecting link which alone can join God and man together.

Christ is Mediator, not because of that which He *did*, but because of that which He *is*.¹

¹ In losing sight of the continued manhood of our Blessed Lord, we not only miss the key to the full acceptance of His loving work for us, but also the great feature which distinguishes Christianity from all the religions of the world. Two hundred years ago, divines, such as Stillingfleet, insisted with great force on the argument for Christian Revelation which is to be derived from ideas floating in the ancient world, and, more or less clearly, embodied in various mythologies. The existence of such ideas, it was maintained, could only be accounted for on the supposition of one primitive tradition handed down by the first fathers of our race and spread abroad on the dispersion of mankind after the deluge. Stillingfleet made it his business "to trace out how this original tradition of the world, through its continual passing from one age to another, and through the various humours, tempers, and designs of men, received strange disguises and alterations as to its outward favour and complexion," while yet "there are some certain marks remaining on it by which we find out its true original." (Origines Sacre, vol. ii. ch. 5.)

But more recently results thus obtained and further illustrations opened to us by a more extended acquaintance with Oriental literature, have been perverted to an opposite purpose. Our adversaries, failing in their attempt to spike the gun and render it useless, have attempted to point it against us. They maintain that so far from these various traditions supporting the teachings of Scripture as being corruptions, or fainter memories, of one original truth, the teaching of Scripture is derived from these traditions, and that Christianity is, as to its main idea, grounded on the varied and, as we can show, radically discordant systems of heathendom. The Gospel is thus represented as a compilation and adaptation of men, and not a Revelation from God.

An answer to this is to be found in the circumstance that Christianity is not a mere scheme of doctrine, but a fact. Our Creeds do not reduce religious theories into a system ; they state facts which are capable of historical proof. While it may be shown how all inward truth, all that is good and sound in the workings of men's minds, really meets in Christ, and how His religion, which has passed through the crucible of all the philosophies, coming out sterling gold from the process, contains in itself whatever of good was in them, satisfies the legitimate yearnings of the human soul, and supplies the key to those difficulties which perplexed

Being thus Mediator by nature, how does He mediate ?

First : He has to remove the barrier which exists between man and his God by making satisfaction for man's transgression.

the wise of this world in their feeling after God,—yet, at the same time, Christianity has its outward as well as its inward manifestations : it is a history as well as a philosophy. While it speaks from God to the heart in tones not to be mistaken, it has what other systems cannot pretend to, the firm basis of historical reality.

But, further, it may be shown that Christianity proclaims truth which is distinctly original and peculiar to itself. The great point of correspondence between it and human mythologies which has been insisted on is the idea of the union of Deity with man which we see realised in the Incarnation of our Lord. It is true (as Dörner points out) that the idea is “the one germ which is found in all religions, and that just because, and in so far as, they are religions : while, in proportion as each religion reaches maturity, essential differences are to be found as to the way in which the unity of the Divine and human is arrived at and conceived.” But “Christianity asserts the idea of the God-man in a manner altogether peculiar. In Jesus of Nazareth, according to the universal and perpetual belief of the Christian Church, the unity of the Divine and human has appeared in a personal and unique mode.” That which the wise and good of all nations yearned and longed after in vain, and for which they “felt” with a wisdom which could not “know” God, is exhibited in Christ in a way to which their most soaring thoughts never approached.

This lies in the truth of the real and perfect “humanification” of God. God became very man. “The two whole and perfect natures, the God-head and manhood, were joined in one Person never to be divided.”

Western Heathenism, represented at its best by the mythology of ancient Greece, is hopelessly wide of the mark. It never aspired beyond the rising of its heroes up to the gods of Olympus. And, though the systems of Eastern races have come much nearer to the truth, they have ever missed its cardinal distinguishing feature. In Vishnu we have the Incarnation of the second member of the Trimurti. Among other things He becomes a man. But there is no true assumption of humanity. He is continually becoming incarnate and appearing in a variety of forms more or less grotesque. As Christna, he comes to earth to perform certain deeds, and returns to heaven again, laying aside his humanity altogether. In Buddhism and Parseism too, which have been so much vaunted of late, a parallel deficiency is manifested. The unity of the

Secondly : He has, in virtue of this satisfaction, having removed the obstruction and procured the possibility of pardon, to apply the merits of this portion of His work, and to bring back men into communion with God.

The first of these things He did during His earthly life and in His Death upon the Cross.

Christ was not a man merely, but *the* man ; “ the second man,” as St. Paul calls Him. As Adam, the first man, represented all mankind who should be born from him : so Christ represents all mankind. He took into God not the nature of a particular man, but human nature in general. As it has been well put, Christ so occupied human nature that He could act for the entire race.

Thus, on earth, He was our representative. He mediated not only as being the Communicator of the Truth and Light of God to men ; the channel through which Divine Know-

Divine and human has no real existence whatever. The principle known as Dualism, or the essential separation between the material and the spiritual, runs throughout them. And even the philosophy of Philo, which more nearly approached the Christian idea, failed as absolutely as regards the God-man. “ In the retrospect of all religious history before Christ we find this—as a preparation for the Gospel in the fullest sense, and as serving for a proof that Christianity gives expression to that which all religions seek—that it embraces within itself whatever is true in Heathenism and Judaism ;* but not less for a proof also that the idea of the God-man, which so peculiarly characterizes Christianity, has not emerged from without Christianity, but wholly from within it. To Christianity this idea is original and essential. The beginning was the fact, and the fact gave the knowledge.”—DÖRNER, *Person of Christ*, Div. I. vol. i. p. 45.

* By “ Judaism ” Dörner does not mean the religion of the Old Testament. The German divines distinguish Hebraism from Judaism, applying the former term to designate the religious system developed in the Old Testament, and the latter to designate the system of traditional belief which arose after the closing of the Old Testament canon.—Translator’s Note, Clark’s Edinburgh Edition.

ledge flowed down from Heaven into our souls, but by offering His own perfect obedience and perfect righteousness, each perfect through the power of His indwelling Godhead.

Above all He mediated by offering Himself a Sacrifice to God in the Death of the Cross. He thus made Reconciliation for our sins and the sins of all mankind, and purchased the right of a full Redemption, His offering being of infinite value and ever-abiding efficacy, being sanctified by His eternal Godhead.

But His Mediation does not cease with this its central act. All before looked forward to it. All since looks back to it. But He is Mediator, as we have said, not because of that which He does, but because of that which He is. His Mediatorship continues as long as He is both God and man, and there exist subjects for the exercise of His mediatorial functions. But He is both God and man for ever. The only limit, then, of His Mediation is the existence of men in that state of probation, and with that need and capacity of being joined to God, which it is the office of the Mediator to provide for.

We must not alter St. Paul's words. He said long after Christ had gone back to Heaven, that as truly as there is One God, so is there "One Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus." We must not change this into, "There was once in the days of Pontius Pilate one such Mediator."

And how does Christ mediate now?

It is this which is about to occupy our thoughts. We shall see, it is hoped, that Christ mediates, first by applying to men who come to Him that pardon and forgiveness the right of which He purchased by His Death; and, secondly, by joining them to Himself, imparting to them the grace of which His Manhood is the source, raising them

is Himself silent, not of One who is ever pleading for us in Heaven. We use in all good faith a set of Scriptural phrases, until, in love with their very sound, we forget their true sense.

For instance, the "finished work of Christ" has passed with many into an unmeaning, and with some into a falsely suggestive, shibboleth.

God forbid that any of us should fail to feel the real force of our Lord's dying cry, "It is finished." It tells us of many things finished, and of one thing above all.

Finished is the determinate counsel of God in the act of those murderous hands which have nailed Him to the tree ; finished is that earthly curse, those earthly sorrows, earthly trials ; finished is the malice of enemies ; the draining of the bitter cup of God's wrath against sin ; the anguish of the thorns and nails, the dying thirst, the pain of the ebbing out of life. Yet these are but the accidents of the great completion. Finished is the one sacrifice for man's transgression, full, perfect, all-sufficient.

But our Lord did not mean that nothing more remained for Him to do and for us to think of.

If we try to make the Crucifixion a real thing to ourselves and not merely the expression of a theological truth, we find we must go on further.

Let us go back in thought to Calvary. The darkness which has been hanging for three hours over the land, like a pall, is slowly lifting. A few Roman soldiers, firm to duty but troubled and uncertain in mind, are grouped beneath "the tree." One of them holds in his hand that spear whose wanton wound shall outlive all the histories of the world and the recorded acts of heroes. Farther off, scared from their earlier station near to the Crucified One,

but still attended by the disciple whom Jesus loved, are Mary His Virgin Mother, and the two other Marys, with the ministering women. Remorse has driven away the more thoughtful of the crowd. Perhaps the earthquake and the rending of the rocks helped to disperse the curious and the mocking. They are now hearing, as they re-enter Jerusalem, how the veil of the Temple, stiff with embroidery and strong with cunning work of precious metal, has been discovered rent in twain as by a stroke from above ; and how some have seen strange shapes arise from the sepulchres of the fathers, and move on in the dimness towards the Holy City.

And now a fuller light falls on the drooping head and pale outstretched arms of the Man on the central Cross. The thieves on His right hand and on His left still writhe in half unconsciousness ; but He is calm and motionless, beyond all question dead !

Could we find it in our hearts to leave Him thus, even did we suppose that here all our interest in Him ceases ? No ! Meditation of necessity draws us on. This cannot be the end. A great blow has been struck ; a fearful deed has been accomplished ; an infinite work achieved ; but it is as when among ourselves men after some grave incident look each other in the face, and solemnly ask, What next ?

We find, too, no immediate effects for the good of men, following at once upon the Death of Christ. "That Death paid the Ransom for the whole world, but the world lay as yet in deeper darkness and sin. In that awful night when the first-fruits of our Redemption, the pardoned malefactor, was by His side in Paradise, and He brought the blessed tidings to the righteous departed who had so long awaited His coming, how lay our earth ? Apostles dismayed and

perplexed : Peter weeping his fall, and but half restored : the Blood of the Redeemer resting on the Jews and their children : the Chief Priests seeking to secure the past by further sin : the whole world, as before, lying in wickedness. The sun had gone down at noonday, withdrawing itself from witnessing man's extremest sin, and its Creator's death. The mercy of Redemption had been accomplished, but through the fulness of man's iniquity. The very bodies of the Saints, who were awakened and arose, were held in still suspense. Not until after His Resurrection did they enter into the Holy City and appear unto many. The Countless Price was indeed paid : but the Ransomed were not as yet set free. They were yet in their sins."¹

There still remained something to complete that purpose of Christ which found its central expression on the Cross. He who died for our sins must also rise again for our justification. Reconciled by His Death, men had yet "to be saved by His Life."

Light is chiefly thrown on this process by St. Paul² in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Not that it is unnoticed in other writings of his, or that other writers are silent concerning it. It is continually taken for granted or referred to as known truth, but St. Paul in this Epistle illustrates it at length. St. John tells us of Christ's advocacy with the Father, and

¹ Dr. Pusey's Sermons, vol. i. p. 218.

² In thus connecting St. Paul's name with the Epistle to the Hebrews there is no intention to ignore the controversy which has been raised respecting its authorship. We are satisfied, however, to follow the title of our own version, believing that "after a review of external testimony from the Eastern and Western Churches, and of the internal evidence supplied by the Epistle itself, we must arrive at the conclusion that the Epistle to the Hebrews, both in its substance and its language, is from one and the same person, the Apostle St. Paul."—Bp. WORDSWORTH, *Introduction to Epistle to Hebrews* (Greek Testament).

that He *is*, not that He *was*, the propitiation for our sins.¹ The Epistle to the Romans and others proclaim the Mediator and Intercessor. The great theme of the first Gospel preaching preserved to us in the Acts of the Apostles was Christ risen and exalted to the right hand of God, to carry out that which He only began during His earthly life. And the closing vision of the Apocalypse² abounds with references to the Sacrificial Lamb standing "as it had been slain," in the midst of the Throne, and not only receiving the homage of angels and saints for Redemption wrought, but affording to His servants, since His exaltation, the means of cleansing and purification in His Blood. Thus the Church cries to her Lord, "O Lamb of God, that *takest* away the sins of the world,"³ have mercy upon us."

We are indebted, under God, for the partial raising of the veil which shows Christ in His continual Intercession, to the trials and temptations of the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem. These had greatly disturbed their minds, and even led some of their number to lapse from the faith. Besides outward troubles, such as the murder of their Bishop, St. James,⁴ inward doubts and difficulties were assailing them. The time was come when they must choose between the faith of Jesus and that of their forefathers. Hitherto, being but "babes in Christ," they had not entirely broken away from the old religion. But now an open breach between the two systems

¹ I St. John ii. 1, 2.

² Rev. v. 6—9; vii. 14; xii. 11; xiii. 8.

³ Qui *tollis* peccata mundi.

⁴ "Eusebius says (H. E. ii. 23) that James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, was martyred by the Jews at Jerusalem because they were disappointed by the escape of St. Paul from their hands. The martyrdom took place at the Passover, A.D. 62."—BP. WORDSWORTH, *Chronological Synopsis of Events related in the Acts of the Apostles*, p. 25.

was imminent. On the one hand, they were in danger of being excluded from the Temple and its worship ; on the other, what seemed the innovations of the Apostolic doctrine were becoming more strongly marked. The dispensation of Moses was waning hour by hour. The Lord's Day was beginning to supersede their ancient Sabbath. The High Priest, the Sacrifices, the glorious Temple were about to be lost to them. The hope that in the Kingdom of the Messias there would come a revival of the glories of the Jewish Theocracy was being extinguished ; and the thought occurred to their minds, Had they gained an equivalent for the blessings they were thus called upon to resign ?

To meet their perplexity the Epistle to the Hebrews was written. Its object was to show that in Christ they possessed that reality for which the Law was but a preparation ; and that, so far from loss in Him, His superiority at every step ensures them such an amount of blessing, (if they do but take hold of it by a faith like that of their fathers,) as may carry them through all their difficulties, and sanctify all their sufferings. Generally, they are directed to Christ as to a living Saviour. His present action in their behalf is to be their hope and encouragement. In Him they have a Mediator nearer than the angels to the Father and superior to Moses ; His office was foreshown by the services of the High Priests in the Tabernacle ; His Sabbath in Heaven is the true Sabbath, His Covenant the efficacious Covenant, His Atonement and Intercession the one prevailing remedy provided by God for men's sins.¹ And, incidentally, by reference to a special function of the Jewish High

¹ Cf. Bp. Wordsworth, Preface to Epistle to Hebrews, and Rev. W. J. Bullock, article "Epistle to Hebrews," in Dr. Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

Priest, Christ's present office in our behalf is distinctly set forth.

This is done in a very remarkable way. We are all accustomed to the notion that the Law of Moses illustrates the work of Christ, that is, that it does not merely happen to afford an illustration of it, but was so ordered as purposely to illustrate it.¹ We know too that, with a view to this, a pattern of everything belonging to the Jewish ritual was shown to Moses by God Himself upon the Mount. On that Mount, during the mysterious forty days when the cloud covered Sinai, and Moses passed through into the near presence of Him Whose glory shone like a devouring fire, there arose before him, it would seem, a vision of the worship he was to introduce. There God caused it to appear to him in all its grandeur and with every detail clear, a mystical view, surpassing any direction in words, of the entire order of His service. "Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount."² And this pattern included even minor ornaments, as the shaft and the flowers of beaten work of gold upon the candlestick, and such details as the staves and rings for the Altar of Burnt-offering. Such particularity, the like of which was again shown when David was preparing for, and Solomon was building, the permanent House of God in Jerusalem,³ would even so far serve to impress upon us the strictly typical character of the whole arrangement, and lead us on to gather somewhat of the counsel of Divine

¹ Bp. Butler, "Analogy," Part II. ch. v.

² Hebrews viii. 5. Cf. Exod. xxv. 40; xxvi. 30; xxvii. 8.

³ 1 Chron. xxviii. 11 et seq. David gave to Solomon "the pattern of all that he had *by the Spirit*."

beginning, and is now going on in "the true Tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man."

We need not be disturbed, if, as some seek to show, portions of "the pattern of the Mount" correspond with things previously in use in the outer world. Could tenfold more particulars of resemblance be traced between the Tabernacle service of Israel and that of ancient Egypt, it would prove no more than that God was pleased to employ things with which His people were already familiar for His own purposes, and that He deigned to purify the skill and art and wisdom of men into their highest use, namely, the acceptable and expressive worship of Himself.

Without seeking, then, to press uncertain details or to discover fanciful meanings, but adhering to the points indicated in Scripture, let us humbly strive to gather together some of those rays of light which thus fall upon us through the opened door of Heaven.

VIII.

TEACHING OF THE TYPES.

THROUGHOUT the Epistle to the Hebrews our Saviour is set before us as the Great High Priest. His Incarnation is represented as taking place with a view to this office. Every High Priest, we are told, is one "taken from among men, ordained for men in their relation to God."¹ This is the Apostle's definition of a High Priest, and one which he shows to fit the Priesthood of Christ. Though the designation of the Son of God to Priesthood was proclaimed before

¹ Heb. v. 1.

the Incarnation, and though it is His eternal Sonship which gives His Priesthood its power and efficacy, yet it is clearly marked that He must become man, because thus only could He execute the office of a High Priest. "For verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren (in order) that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Again: "This man because He continueth ever hath an unchangeable priesthood." His Priesthood is unchangeable, or intransmissible, *because* He continues ever "man," ever living (in contrast with Aaronic priests who died a natural death), to make intercession for such as come unto God by Him.¹

In the course of the argument we are presented with several touching pictures of Christ's action in our behalf, but we must first address ourselves to that great idea in which all culminates, and, passing by for the time some lesser types and resemblances, see, under St. Paul's teaching, how the Divine truths embodied in the Mosaic law illustrate, so to speak, the heavenly sequel of our Lord's earthly work.

The Jewish system of sacrifice carries on our minds perforce beyond the death of the slain victim to a subsequent process which was necessary in order to render that death beneficial. The shedding of the blood, the principle of "life for life," was, beyond all question, the idea which lay at the foundation of every offering for sin. But that blood was not merely let forth by the sacrificer.

Under the law of ordinary sin-offering, the offender was to offer and slay an animal, confessing his sin over it, with

¹ Heb. ii. 16, 17; vii. 23—25.

his hand laid on its head, at the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation.

When the whole congregation had sinned in a manner which admitted of this mode of reparation, the elders, as representing their brethren, laid their hands on the head of the sacrifice, which consisted, in this case, of a bullock, and it was killed before the Lord.

So far, in each instance, the Priest took no part in the ceremonial.

But, the death being accomplished, the Priest took of the blood, and with certain observances, the chief among which was the sprinkling of it seven times before the veil of the Sanctuary, presented it to God.

Thus an Atonement was made for them, and their sin was to be forgiven.

It will be observed that the Priest did not slay the animal. So distinct are the two parts of the proceeding, that when a Priest was himself the offender, though the slaying was in this case to be done by him, yet he could not make the presentation of the blood ; another Priest must officiate for him.

Thus, though the death of a victim was the necessary basis of the transaction, the death without the offering of the blood did not procure forgiveness.¹

But this principle was most strongly marked by that especial ceremony which St. Paul directly connects with the present employment of Christ in Heaven.

This is the observance of the great Day of Atonement, and the entrance of the High Priest into the Holy of Holies.²

On that day, after preliminary offerings for the personal

¹ Leviticus iv.

² Ibid. xvi.

purification of himself and of his family, the High Priest, clad in his holy garments of white linen in lieu of the gorgeous vestments which he usually wore, took two goats which had been brought to him by the people, and cast lots upon them to decide which should be killed as the sin-offering, and which kept alive to be made the scape-goat.

The sin-offering he himself killed, and brought its blood (as he had previously brought that of the bullock which formed his own offering) into the Holy of Holies, the place of the immediate Presence of God, into which he could enter only on this annual occasion. There, amid a cloud of incense which he offered before the Lord, he sprinkled the blood seven times upon and before the Mercy-seat, and so made an atonement for all the congregation of Israel.

He then went out of the Holy of Holies to the second and next sacred portion of the Tabernacle, known as the Holy Place, and sprinkled some of the blood on the Altar of Incense which stood there. Further, as it seems, he went outside and repeated the mystical sprinkling at the Altar of Burnt-offering at the door of the Tabernacle.

Then, the sprinkling with the blood being completed, to show that atonement was now made for their sins, he took the live goat, and, laying his hands upon its head, confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, "putting them upon the head of the goat."

Finally he sent the goat away to bear upon him the people's sins into a land not inhabited : and the animal disappeared from the eyes of men.

The slain victim evidently represents the sacrifice of the death of Christ. The second goat, which was let go, carrying away the sins of the people, represents the bearing of our sins, and the taking of them away by the same Saviour.

But it will be observed that the living goat did not take away the people's sins until the blood of the slain goat had been presented before God by the High Priest.

St. Paul distinctly tells us what heavenly mystery was thus exhibited. "Christ being come a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect Tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once (for all) into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."¹

The immediate argument here is as to the superiority of the Heaven into which Christ has passed to the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle; of the Blood of Christ to that of the animals sacrificed; and, accordingly, of the mighty effects to be produced by Christ, in the cleansing of our souls, to the ceremonial purification of the Mosaic rites. But, incidentally, he sets up the following parallels.

As the High Priest was admitted into the Presence of God, as manifested in the Tabernacle, by means of the blood of the sacrifices, so Christ entered into Heaven itself.²

As the purified High Priest entered within the veil for and in behalf of the people whom He represented, and as it was by the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices that He was accepted in their stead; so our Great High Priest, Who by the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, by His own Blood of Sprinkling procures our acceptance with God. When, being both Priest and Victim, He offered up His Sacrifice on the Cross, He did that which corresponds with the offering of the slain animals by the High Priest before his entrance within the veil.

¹ Heb. ix. 11, 12.

² See Heb. ix.

When He rose and ascended and passed through the veil into the Heavens, He did that which corresponds with the presentation and sprinkling of the blood in the immediate Presence of God. And the result again corresponds with the figure of the scape-goat, which bore away the sins of Israel after that mysterious sprinkling within the veil.

There was a further meaning in the sprinkling of the blood on the Day of Atonement.

The High Priest not only made reconciliation for the people, but "purified" the Sanctuary itself. By "purifying" is meant rendering it open and available for use, renewing, as it were, its sacred and beneficial character. The portion of the Tabernacle which was the daily scene of priestly ministrations was thus consecrated, and the very Holy of Holies itself preserved in its mysterious relation. The Mercy-seat within the veil, as well as the Holy Place with its Altar of Incense, and the Altar of Burnt-offering which stood without, were all alike sprinkled.

And St. Paul shows how the same principle was asserted at the dedication of the first Covenant of Sinai.¹ It was by sprinkling with the blood of sacrifice that everything was rendered effectual for its purpose. Moses sprinkled the people, the Book, the Tabernacle, the vessels of the ministry. Almost all things were by the Law thus purged or cleansed and rendered available. 'Therefore,' the Apostle continues, 'it was necessary that the copies of things in the Heavens should be purified by these ceremonial purifications; but the heavenly things themselves, the heavenly Holy Places, with better sacrifices than these.' That is, the new dispensation of Heaven must be rendered open and avail-

¹ Heb. ix. 18-24.

able to His people by the better Sacrifice of Christ, and by a better sprinkling than that made by Moses, even the sprinkling of Christ's own most precious Blood.

"For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the copies of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

These references by St. Paul to the outline sketch of the Jewish Law seem clearly to establish two points. First, that Christ's entrance into Heaven "by His own Blood" is the necessary sequel to His shedding of that Blood upon the Cross in order to the practical application of the Atonement then once for all purchased. Secondly, that by the presentation of His Blood in the Courts above, the Gospel dispensation of Grace is commenced, and the Kingdom of Heaven is, in its Divine fulness, opened to all believers.

The teaching of the types brings out, however, a further truth with reference to Christ's presentation of His Blood above. It was not a thing done by Him once for all and so ended, as was the Sacrifice of the Cross. It is not a thing to be regarded as a single act performed at a certain date, but it is still carrying on in the true Holy of Holies. The Sacrifice is not repeated, but the presentation of it is perpetual.

The entire apparatus of the Tabernacle worship indicates a permanent work.

The offerings of Israel were to be continual. The Lamb sacrificed morning and evening was consuming slowly day and night without intermission,¹ a holy oblation "offered four square"² in solid strength and abiding power. The

¹ Exod. xxix. 38—42.

² Ezek. xlviii. 20.

fire was ever burning on the altar. "It shall never go out" was God's own word.¹ The Meat-offering of bread and wine, salt and frankincense was to be perpetual.² The shewbread was to be set upon the table "before Me (saith the Lord) alway."³ The lamps of the pure candlestick, a special copy of the "copy of the Mount," were to burn with one unceasing flame.⁴

These details, let us remember, all represented and were ordained to correspond with the true ritual of Heaven.

Another and unmistakeable emblem of the work of Christ for us is to be found in the Incense-offering. Incense is sometimes used in Scripture as signifying Prayer. David says, "Let my prayer be set before Thee as Incense:"⁵ and we read in the Book of Revelation of the "golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of the saints."⁶ But it chiefly signifies the medium through which prayer is accepted. At the opening of the seventh seal, "another angel," understood to be our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, stands at the altar having a golden censer: "And there was given unto him much Incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne: and the smoke of the Incense, which came up with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand."⁷

Incense, too, was that which procured the High Priest's acceptance in the Most Holy Place. Indeed without it he

¹ Levit. vi. 13.

² Levit. vi. 20.

³ Exod. xxv. 30.

⁴ Exod. xxvii. 20; Levit. xxiv. 2.

⁵ Psalm cxli. 2.

⁶ Rev. v. 8.

⁷ Rev. viii. 3, 4. Some understand the angel here spoken of to be not our Lord Himself, but a created angel. Yet even thus our point that Incense is used to signify the medium through which Prayer is accepted, (which we know to be Christ's merits,) is still made out.

could not enter in safety. The cloud of the Incense must cover the Mercy-seat "that he die not."¹

Thus Incense corresponds with that on which alone acceptance of man's worship is based, the Intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, greatest stress is laid on the offering of Incense being continual. Each morning at break of day when Aaron trimmed the lamps which were to burn ever, and each evening when the sacrifice had been offered, "a perpetual Incense before the Lord"² was to be presented on the golden Altar.

For the symbolism of the Mercy-seat or "propitiatory" as witnessing to the same truth, we have, in the opinion of some great divines, direct Apostolic authority.³ St. Paul says of Christ, "Whom God hath set forth to be 'a propitiatory' through faith in His blood."⁴ Stress is laid on the fact not only that the Mercy-seat was the continual medium of God's blessing and pardoning grace, but that the blood of the sacrifice was ever visibly exhibited upon it. The sprinkling made on the Day of Atonement was never wiped off, but remained year after year an effectual memorial before God. In representing Christ, then, as set forth to be "a propitiatory," St. Paul means that Christ's Blood is ever exhibited before the Father, pleading unceasingly for man's salvation.

There is another ordinance of the Mosaic Law which seems to bring out very strongly the same Scriptural truth. Here, however, the advice of St. Francis de Sales to a

¹ Lev. xvi. 13.

² Exod. xxx. 8.

³ As Bp. Beveridge. Sermon LXIX. Works, vol. iii. pp. 330-32.

⁴ Rom. iii. 25. The word is *ἱλαστήριον*. In 1 St. John ii. 2, and iv. 10, it is *ἱλασμός*.

preacher of his own time, suggests our safest mode of using it: "Unless it is very obvious that the type was designed, it is better only to use it as a comparison. I would rather compare the two things than affirm positively that one meant the other."¹ Good and sober writers, however, deem that the Sacrifice of the Red Heifer is strictly applicable.

That there is a general correspondence between the effects of the ashes of this sacrifice and the Blood of Christ is taught us by St. Paul. "If . . . the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"² It is at least certain, then, that this Levitical rite for the cleansing of persons who, among other pollutions, had touched a dead body, prefigured Christ's power of cleansing (and that in its future exercise³) from the death of sin.

In this ordinance there was something altogether peculiar.⁴ Other sacrifices needed to be offered afresh for each individual offender, and the sprinkling of the Holy of Holies itself had to be annually repeated. But when the heifer, "without spot" and wherein was no blemish, had been slain, and its blood sprinkled before the Tabernacle of the Congregation, the body was reduced to ashes. These ashes were gathered up and carefully stored away in a "clean," or holy, place, to be mingled with water and so constitute a purification from sin, as the people might require it.

¹ Spiritual Letters of St. Francis de Sales, p. 31.

² Heb. ix. 13, 14.

³ Καθαριε̃.

⁴ See Numb. xix.

According to the Jewish tradition the heifer was offered only nine times during the dispensation of the Law. From its first institution when Eleazar, the son of Aaron, carried out the solemnity in the wilderness until the destruction of Solomon's Temple, that is during a space of a thousand years or more, there was no repetition of it. It was for the second time offered by Ezra, after the return from the captivity, and but seven times afterwards down to the destruction of the second Temple.

"And," to quote Dean Jackson, who is our authority for the above statements,¹ "this foolish nation since that time hath not presumed to offer it, but expects the offering of it the tenth time by their King, Messiah. He was indeed to set the period to this legal rite and to all the rest, not by offering them after a legal rite or manner, but by offering up Himself instead of them all, once for all, in bloody sacrifice, in whose infinite value and everlasting efficacy all other sacrifices or offerings for sin were so terminated and swallowed up, as land-rivers or currents of waters are in the sea. But what circumstances have we from the written text that this sacrifice was not to be so often offered, as this people had occasion to use the water of sprinkling or the ashes of this sacrifice to cleanse them from their former legal pollutions? It is said that the ashes should be laid up 'without the camp in a clean place' (*εἰς διατήρησιν*), and reserved or kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation. The ashes were to be reserved, not for this generation only present, but for the use of posterity. As manna, which was commanded in the same character to be reserved in the ark, was the type of Christ as He is the food of life, or the bread which came down from Heaven ; so were these ashes, as an emblem of

the everlasting efficacy or operative virtue of His sacrifice. There is no bodily substance under Heaven which can be so true an emblem or model of incorruption as ashes are. Being 'the remainder of bodies perfectly dissolved or corrupted, they are not capable of a second corruption. And when it is said that the ashes should be reserved for a water of separation, the meaning is that one sacrifice might afford ashes enough to season or qualify as many several vessels of water as this people for many generations should have occasion to use for legal purification. So it is said in the same ninth verse, that the reservation of these ashes was 'a purification for sin.' A purification, not in act only, or for one or two turns, but a continual purification : or as a treasury or storehouse for making as many purifications or waters of sprinkling as this people had occasion to use. And so Christ is said (Heb. i. 3) to have made a purification for our sins : 'When He had by Himself purged our sins (saith our English), He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.' But the translation (under correction) comes somewhat short of the original. The Apostle's words are (*καθαρισμὸν ποιησάμενος*) having made a purification for sin, He hath ascended into Heaven. The word 'purification' is not to be restrained to one act or operation, but includes or implies the 'perpetual quality' of Himself, or substance of His sacrifice, being by this one act consecrated to be a perpetual fountain of purification. As He did not only make one propitiation or atonement for our sins, but remains still the propitiation for our sins : so neither did He once actually purge us from our sins by offering up Himself, but still remains the purification of our sins : that is, He doth still purify and cleanse us from our sins, as often as we seek by faith and

true repentance to be cleansed and purified by Him. So then the blood of the legal sacrifice or heifer did consecrate the ashes to be as a storehouse or treasury of legal purification: and the ashes thus consecrated by this sacrifice did hallow or consecrate the water which was put into them, to make actual purification as often as occasion required. So did our High Priest, by the one sacrifice of Himself, consecrate His Blood to be an inexhaustible fountain of purification evangelical.”¹

IX.

THE CONTINUAL PRIESTHOOD.

THE types of the Law thus lead us on to a definite view of the present work of our Lord. That which He died upon the Cross to procure, He lives in Heaven to apply.

This is the conclusion to which St. Paul would bring us. Having instanced the order of the Mosaic ritual to impress on us the real Priestly office of Christ, he makes two emphatic statements from a comparison of which the truth we are tracing follows. The Sacrifice of Christ is one, single, never to be repeated. But the Priesthood of Christ is perpetual.

Comparing the Priesthood of our Lord with that of Aaron and his successors, he is careful to guard against a misconception to which a too close pressing of the parallel might lead. The Atonement of Christ being that of the Eternal Son of God is in itself of infinite value and power; and, unlike the imperfect offerings of men that die, needs not to be re-enacted, as were theirs, in successive years.² He is

¹ Dean Jackson on Creed, vol. ix. pp. 601—605.

² Compare Heb. ix. 25—28.

not to "offer Himself often, as the High Priest entered into the Holy Place every year with blood of others; for then (since from the beginning no sins have been forgiven save through His sacrifice) must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the consummation of ages¹ hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as men die only once, so Christ, being man, died only once; being offered once, and so making an atonement sufficient for all men in all time."

St. Paul, as does St. Peter,² insists emphatically on this point.

But while the sacrifice is one, the Priesthood is perpetual. It is coincident with His Humanity. "This Man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable Priesthood." It is a Priesthood "for ever after the order of Melchisedec."³ Christ, St. Paul argues, was consecrated to His office, not by the ordinary consecration of Levitical priests, but by the oath of God. This made Him a Priest "for evermore." Among the features of His superiority to the line of Aaron this stands conspicuous, that (as was typified by the mysterious Melchisedec, a priest by no earthly descent, and with no limit assigned to the period of his ministration) Christ's Priesthood should be never-ending. Previously there had been many High Priests, for death cut them off one by one like other men; but this Man "is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."⁴

¹ Ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων. "In the end of the time (*i.e.* in the time of the fulfilment, the Messianic time, in opposition to the time of expectation and prophecy." (Ebrard.)

² 1 St. Pet. iii. 18.

³ Heb. vii. 24; vi. 20.

⁴ Heb. vii. throughout.

"The Priesthood of Christ, then, being perpetual, yet employing but a single sacrificial act, it must consist in a constant reference to that Sacrifice, of which His own Blessed Person stands in Heaven as the undying memorial."¹

'We have,' says St. Paul in effect as he sums up his argument,² 'such a High Priest as I have been describing, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the Heavens; a minister of the true Sanctuary and of the true Tabernacle (that is, the heavenly), which the Lord hath pitched and not man.

'But every High Priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices.

'Wherefore it is of necessity that this Man have somewhat also to offer. And this in Heaven, for the Priesthood was not an earthly Priesthood, nor was He Himself of the priestly tribe according to the Levitical Law.

'But that which the Law shadowed He performs. He carries out, only in an infinitely better manner as Mediator of a better Covenant, that for which the Old Covenant was a preparation.

'What then does He, as a High Priest, offer? How does He execute His mysterious office?

'He offers no animal sacrifices: nor does He repeat His own sacrifice once made.

'This is His work. Fulfilling the type of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies, He presents His own Blood as the means of our eternal Redemption. Thus, by the way of a sacrifice ever fresh, full of life in the life of an ever-living Lord Who is also one with us in His true Humanity, He permits us to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.'

¹ Archer Butler, Sermons, 1st series, x. p. 190. ² Heb. viii.—x.

We are thus enabled to understand St. Paul's statement elsewhere, that Christ, Who "was delivered for our offences," was "raised again for our justification."¹

No doubt the common explanations given of these words are true as far as they go. One of these, and perhaps the most frequent, is that our Lord was raised again for our justification in that it was made evident by His Resurrection that His Sacrifice had been accepted by God. His rising was thus a public and permanent declaration, in the sight of men and angels, that we who believe in Christ are no longer in a state of guilt and condemnation, but are raised together with Him and are absolved and justified in Him. Another view is that Christ rose again for our justification, because He rose again that He might ascend, and ascending send down to us the Holy Spirit by Whose grace alone we are brought into that state of comparative holiness in which we can be justified.

But can these interpretations be accepted as sufficient?

Against the latter, not the action of the Holy Spirit only, but some direct work or effect of Christ Himself, seems to be referred to by St. Paul. Against the former, which represents His rising "for our justification" to mean His rising that our justification may be made evident to ourselves or others, it may be pointed out that the connection between His Resurrection and our justification is as direct as that between His deliverance over unto death and His Atonement for our offences. It is "for" our offences, and "for" our justification.

No one holds that Christ was "delivered for our offences" merely that we might be *assured* by His Death of a satisfaction made for our sins! That Death at all events was no

¹ Rom. iv. 25.

mere form gone through to proclaim a spiritual truth to men, or to certify to them by an awful sign of a new relation opened for them with God. It was a tremendous reality. And as absolutely as was Christ's Death for our offences, so was His Resurrection for our justification. As He was "delivered" for the one, so was He "raised" for the other. If that Death was a real transaction without which our offences could not, according to God's plan of salvation, be atoned for; so was that Resurrection a real transaction without which we could not be justified. To reduce the one to a mere sign or assurance is, to say the least, seriously to impair St. Paul's testimony to the reality of the other.

And with this text we must couple St. Paul's solemn word in another place. "If Christ be not risen," he says, "then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."¹ This he immediately explains: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins."² These passages, too, are often diluted by commentators. We are told that St. Paul means, 'If Christ be not raised, ye have no evidence of the substantial ground of your faith, and so of the forgiveness of your sins.' But, if it be only that the evidence would thus be lacking, would St. Paul have spoken as he does? If our sins are really and actually forgiven, though we know it not, our faith in Christ is not in vain. God's judgment as to our state cannot be affected by ignorance on our part of the issue of that judgment. His decision as to our individual acceptableness, if actually arrived at, cannot be rendered null and void because no sign has been vouchsafed by which we are informed of it. We are not in our sins if God, for the sake of Christ's Sacrifice on the Cross, has put those sins away.

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 14.

² Ibid. xv. 17.

It is clear, then, so far, that Christ's death, standing alone, would not have been efficient for our salvation. Something further must take place that the benefits of that Death may reach us, and we be accepted with God. It is clear that, while that Death was sufficient to pay the penalty and to remove the obstruction which kept man from God, Christ's risen life is declared to be necessary for our participation in its results. Each part of the Divine plan has its own proper efficacy. Nothing can be done for mere appearance. That grand events of our Lord's visible career should be mere arrangements, or acted parables for the representation of particular truths, is, when we come to think more closely, inconceivable. Does not St. Paul explain his own meaning when he says,¹ "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that *justifieth*. Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, Who is even at the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us.*" That is, it is Christ Who is risen and ascended into Heaven, Who procures our justification against all accusers. He is there to obtain for us that acceptance with God which He lived and died to win.

St. Paul, reverting to his allusion to the blood of the first Covenant, puts it in another way.² Speaking of the present privileges of Christians who are come into possession of those gifts which attach to the communion of saints, namely, access to God and fellowship with angels and the world unseen, in addition to the immediate blessings of the Church on earth, he goes on as to a climax, "and to Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Here their

¹ Rom. viii. 33, 34.

² Heb. xii. 22—24.

communion with Christ is regarded as an existing reality of which they are in present enjoyment ; and, by consequence, the blood of sprinkling is an existing reality also. It is no ancient memory or fact gone by, to be looked back upon with devout thankfulness, but a something to be now communicated and participated in. As the blood of Abel cried unto God for vengeance from the ground while God was making known his doom to Cain, so is the Blood of Christ, day by day and hour by hour, crying for mercy on us sinners, until the time arrives when mercy shall give place to judgment. So St. John tells us. The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, is ever actively cleansing them that walk in the light, as He is in the light, from all sin.¹

He of Whom it was foretold that He should sprinkle many nations,² is, day by day and hour by hour, thus applying His merits to such as come unto God by Him.

This is our first view of the Great High Priest carrying on His saving work.

We are not, then, to regard our acceptance as a kind of general consequence of that which Christ has done for us, as if we found ourselves, through the Atonement on the Cross, under such changed relation to God as enables us to approach Him at will. This seems to be the idea of many amongst us, but practically it is little distinguishable from the main position of Rationalism. The Rationalist claims for man the right and the power of direct approach to God in the strength of the reason which God has given him. He considers that he can hold communion with his Maker without the gift of any outward revelation or the interposition of any Mediator. And many Christians seem to consider that Christ came eighteen centuries ago and did

¹ 1 St. John i. 7.

² Isa. lii. 15.

that which had the effect of establishing an immediate relation between the human spirit and the Divine ; so that they can do, through a past act of Christ, that which the Rationalist claims to do through the original gift of God. The difference lies in the assumed date of the gift, and in the introduction by the Christian of what the other regards as a disproportionately awful and unnecessarily intricate process for the obtaining of such result.

Nor is it enough to go a step further, and to conceive that Christ by His Death established a fund of merit in which we can, on certain conditions, make ourselves participants. It is not as if there had flowed out of His sacred side, when it was pierced by the Roman spear, a healing stream in which we can at will, without any act of His, wash and be clean. Figures of speech, such as "fountains filled with blood," which illustrate the fulness and abundance of Christ's mercy, have led us to imagine a spiritual reservoir of grace, which waits only for our willingness to dive into it. We see Bethesdas before us, and forget that we lie, like the impotent man, in a sad case, until Jesus speaks the word of power.

But faith's view of the High Priest in Heaven corrects any such notions. It prevents our losing sight of Christ in Christianity, and making our religion a self-applied scheme of doctrine, a mental reference to certain consequences of His work instead of an approach to Him as an acting, living Lord. Faith itself, that is our notion of faith, may become a snare to us. It is, as all admit, the first condition which He looks for in our conscious seeking of those blessings which His Death has purchased and His Life applies. But we must not confound the possession of the condition with the bestowal of the gift, or make the qualification on

our part supersede the act of the Giver. We may thus put something of our own, namely an inward motion of our minds, as completely in the place of Christ, as any can do who are supposed to rely on their own good works.

Rather are we to see how all depends on that mysterious function exercising within the veil. It is a great thought that "coming to Christ" we set in motion a Divine machinery as real and far more effectual (for the earthly and material was but the shadow of the heavenly substance) than was that of the Jewish ritual. There, as His Church solemnly invokes His Intercession, or as His humblest member craves His Mediatorial aid, Jesus presents the Blood of His own Sacrifice in our behalf, and makes its blessings ours. We do not merely awaken an ancient memory when we pray "through Jesus Christ our Lord." We do not simply ask the Father to be gracious to us for the sake of that which His dear Son did and suffered on earth. As our hearts' cry ascends, a living Form, human yet how divinely bright, bearing the marks of wounds still fresh, though radiant with glory, steps forward in our behalf, and a living Voice pleads for us, in all-prevailing tones, before the everlasting Throne.

X.

THE PRAYER OF INTERCESSION.

THE thought may occur to some, Is the concluding expression of the last chapter quite justifiable? As we see by faith our Lord in His work of Intercession, are we to conceive that He pleads for us in actual words? Is it not

better to suppose that He rather obtains for us, now that He sits "a Priest upon His Throne," by the power of "His unexpressed desire"?

So long as we hold His Intercession to be real, our belief either way is of comparatively small importance, and good divines have maintained opposite views on the subject.

It may be urged, therefore, that it is better to leave it untouched.

But, as a matter of fact, the inquiry does present itself to our minds when we are able to form any picture in them of Christ in His living love ; and it cannot be wrong to ask how far Holy Scripture pronounces or infers.

Some, who think that there is an incongruity in the notion of the Son of God offering prayer now that He is exalted in His glory, put forward the argument that no words are prescribed in Leviticus for Aaron's use when he was to present the blood of the sacrifice in the Holy of Holies. To this it has been replied that the Jewish priests in later times did use a form of words on the occasion ; from which it may be at least concluded that no tradition existed among them that the omission in the sacred Law was intended to be significant.

But to form an opinion, for or against the belief, on such grounds seems to involve a too close pressing of the type.

It is true also that, in the vision of Heaven seen by St. John, "the Lamb as it had been slain" stands in the midst of the Throne, with the symbols of sevenfold power and sevenfold grace, interceding by presence rather than by word, and that He Himself receives the homage of the saints in the "new song" which celebrates His Redemption.¹

¹ Rev. v. 6—14.

The signs of the Death which He endured are upon Him still ; but, as far as the description goes, the pleading of that Death appears to be among those things which, as St. Ignatius says, are " wrought in the silence of God." ¹

On the other hand, St. Paul seems to imply a pleading in words. Speaking of Christ as man and of His continuance as a living man, (unlike the men who died,) in the priestly office, he declares that He ever liveth *to make intercession* for them. And this Intercession is opposed to the spoken accusations of supposed enemies. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, Who is even on the right hand of God, Who also maketh intercession for us." ²

It is true that the word 'intercession' is used in one place of unspoken desires. It occurs, in fact, a few verses before the passage last quoted. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities : for we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." ³

But this seems to refer not to any action external to us, but to effects produced within us. It seems to mean, that in our spiritual trials and afflictions, in our weakness and ignorance, the Holy Spirit, prompting a yearning cry in the deep of the heart, produces in us that which is as effectual as a spoken supplication. And God, Who knows what is in

¹ Quoted by Archdeacon Freeman, "Principles of Divine Service," vol. ii. p. 184.

² Heb. vii. 25 ; Rom. viii. 33, 34.

³ Rom. viii. 26, 27.

our hearts without expression of our feeling in words, understands and accepts this inarticulate groaning, recognising in it the prayer which the Spirit suggests. Intercession, in the literal sense, is not the office of the Spirit Who is God only and not man, but of Him Who, being man as well as God, pleads with God for man.

St. John's mention of 'an Advocate' with the Father seems to imply a personal pleading. "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."¹

But our Lord's own words bear upon the point. He said on the very eve of His Passion, and in a discourse which relates throughout to a state of things which should commence after His departure, "*I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter.*"²

Again; "In that day I say not unto you that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me and have believed that I came out from God."³ That is, 'In your case that which is ordinarily necessary, My direct intercession by prayer, will not be required: because your love for Me and your faith in Me possess already the special love of the Father.' He

¹ 1 St. John ii. 1.

The word rendered Advocate (*παράκλητος*) is used in the Septuagint to represent two Hebrew words, one corresponding with 'Comforter,' the other with 'Interpreter,' and 'Advocate,'—one whose office it is to speak for a person or plead his cause. In St. John's Gospel where inward effects are referred to, we translate it 'Comforter'; but in this passage from his Epistle Christ is spoken of as acting for us in relation to One without us. The second meaning of 'Advocate,' therefore, becomes necessary; and it certainly conveys the notion of a special interference on the part of our High Priest over and above the effect of His Presence in Heaven.

² St. John xiv. 16.

³ St. John xvi. 26, 27.

does not say, 'I will not ask because asking will be out of place in Me then,' but 'because in your particular cases it will be superfluous.'¹

All this seems to encourage the thought that Christ prays for us in Heaven ; that He there pleads for us in words, or if not in man's words of articulate language, yet by something corresponding to them, and to which our speaking in words is the human equivalent. But we may go further. Christ has spoken in human tones to men since He went back to Heaven. God hears us when we speak in such ; and our poor words pass through the Lord Jesus to the Throne above. And the Lord Jesus is still very Man. Wherefore, then, should we hesitate to ascribe to Him a literal personal pleading in our behalf? The thought is one which brings great comfort to ourselves, and it is a false notion which makes it derogate from His glory.

We know that He prayed in the days of His flesh. Wherefore, then, *if He is still very Man*, should He not, as Man, still pray? He was God when He prayed on earth as truly and fully as He is God now. His Godhead did not then suffer by this act. Wherefore should it suffer now? Our real difficulty arises from a kind of feeling, in spite of our opposite professions of faith, that the glory of the Godhead in His present exaltation has absorbed His Manhood.

Of course Christ's prayers are of a different kind now. When He was on earth He prayed for Himself. His need of prayer was a part of His humiliation for our sakes. "In the days of His flesh He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that

¹ This is St. Cyril's interpretation. Cf. Dr. Pusey's "Addresses to the Companions of the Love of Jesus," p. 60.

was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared." ¹

The prayer of Gethsemane was, beyond all question, prayer for Himself. Those prayers in which He continued all night on the mountain side were perhaps the blissful intercourse of His spirit with the Father with Whom He is one. Other prayers, as for His disciples, and for His murderers as He hung on the Cross, partake of the character of Divine intercessions; but in the Agony the Son of Man prayed in the very bitterness of His human soul.

All of this is now ended. No shade of anxiety or sorrow passes over Him in His Heavenly life, unless man's sin and man's ingratitude may be deemed to cause such. With Himself all is majesty and glory and power. As Man He is exalted far above all earthly cares and needs. Yet may we not picture Him expressing His desire in His servants' behalf, not as He cried out in the agony of His bitter strife, but rather in such calm strains of loving intercession as He poured forth for His future Church in the holy quiet of the Paschal Chamber?

It seems more consistent with the exercise of His continuous office as Mediator. "No greater gift," says St. Augustine, "could God have given to men than in making His Word, by Which He created all things, their Head, and joining them to Him as His members: that the Son of God might become also the Son of Man, one God with the Father, one Man with men: so that when we speak to God in prayer for mercy, we do not separate the Son from Him: and when the Body of the Son prays, it separates not its Head from itself: and it is one Saviour of His Body, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who both prays for us,

¹ Heb. v. 7.

and prays in us, and is prayed to by us. He prays for us, as our Priest: He prays in us, as our Head. He is prayed to by us, as our God."¹

Shall we err, then, if we conclude that "it is more consonant to Holy Scripture and to piety to hold that Christ, not only by a silent conveying, but by an open and express representation and manifestation of His will, prayeth for us in Heaven?"²

There can be no need to point out how such a conviction, seriously entertained, must touch us. We may have a general confidence in the affection of an earthly friend; but if by any chance we overheard such friend pouring into the ear of another, say of one whom we especially revered and looked up to, the expression of his love and of his tender anxiety in our behalf, how should we feel his friendship! Feeling for us is much; but speaking for us, the carrying out of feeling in such a definite way, seems infinitely more.

Then, if Christ prays for us, how should His prayer constrain us! A general impression of running counter to the mind of the Saviour is sufficiently terrible. But what if He prays and we contradict His prayer: if he pleads before the Father for a single member of His Body, and that member turns back and deliberately lives against Him! His desire for us ought to be our law; but to let the holy angels see us insult Him by open contradiction of His uttered wish, if the thing be truly realised, is overwhelming.

Again; I am dispirited by repeated failure; scared by

¹ St. Augustine on Psalm lxxxvi. (Latin lxxxv.)

² Suarez, quoted by Dr. Pusey, "Addresses to the Companions of the Love of Jesus," p. 59.

the return of some great sin after all my efforts to get rid of it. My soul goes heavily in the attempt to pray ; my eyes fail in looking upward. My whole nature seems consciously cleaving to the dust. I am tempted to abandon prayer as in vain. There is a moment's silence, and my next step may be despair.

But the ear of faith, quickened, it almost seems, in its extremity as the senses are said to quicken in some moment of greatest danger, catches a far-off sound. It is faint at first as well as distant, but, as I listen, it becomes more and more defined and true. I seem to hear my own name and the echo of my own poor words. But whose is the voice? "Lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." My Saviour is praying for me in Heaven.

XI.

THE CHANNEL OF WORSHIP.

Not only does Christ pray for us, a Moses who needs no Aaron and no Hur to stay His uplifted hands,¹ but all our worship ascends through Him. It is His unceasing employment to present with acceptance both the private supplications of His people and their collective offerings of prayer and praise. There is a further mystery here in the fact that Christ is pleased so to identify Himself with His members that their service becomes in a measure His own ; as is expressed by St. Augustine when he says that "He prays in us as our Head ;" but we are now trying to see how we

¹ Exod. xvii. 12.

must view the Great High Priest acting for us, rather than in us, in the Holy of Holies above.

Our Lord's office as the medium of His people's worship was distinctly figured by the High Priest of the Jews, and by the services which he performed. That which Aaron did before God, he did as the representative of Israel. In his person, as he entered the inner shrine, was carried, in a figure, the worship of the people. "There," it was promised to the nation at large, "There will I meet with the children of Israel. There will I accept you ;"¹ though it was one man alone who drew near. Aaron's very dress expressed this. He was to "bear the names of the children of Israel, in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart," when he went into the holy place, "for a memorial before the Lord continually." And the plate of pure gold upon the fore-front of his mitre was designed to bear (that is "in a mystery to bring thither for atonement") the iniquity or imperfections of the holy things which the children of Israel should hallow, or offer. "It shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord."²

And while the High Priest acted in behalf of the people, something on their part was required. He presented their devotions, and it was their offerings that, in his person and at his hand, found favour with God.

The sacrifices represented that One Sacrifice in the merits of which they could not claim to have the smallest share ; but acts of theirs were required to bring them into a beneficial connection with it ; and the High Priest, representing them in such acts, brought them from time to time into such connection.

The great day of Atonement was the occasion of solemn

¹ Cf. Exod. xxv. 22 ; xxx. 43.

² Exod. xxviii. 29, 36, 38.

observances. It was "a holy convocation," a day wherein they were to afflict their souls, and themselves bring the offerings to be made by fire unto the Lord. The two goats for the grand rite of the day, and the ram for the burnt-offering, were to be taken of the congregation of the children of Israel.¹ So, in the ordinary offering, the worshipper made the sacrifice his own by laying his hand on the head of the victim; and in the case of the trespass-offering, by confessing his sin over it, before the priest made the atonement for him. Thus the people, as it were, set in motion the prescribed machinery which the priest applied to its appointed end.²

And prayers on their part accompanied each act of sacrifice. Daniel did but keep the devout rule of his people when he prayed in Babylon about the time of the evening oblation.³ The whole multitude were praying without "at the time of Incense" when Zacharias went in to execute his office before the Lord.⁴ The entrance of the priest into the Holy Place to offer the incense was made known to the people by the sound of a bell, which was the signal that they should betake themselves to silent prayer. We have a striking illustration of this in the account of the grand revival of God's worship by Hezekiah. When he had cleansed God's House and was offering costly sacrifices, we are told: "When the burnt-offering began, the song of the Lord began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David, king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. And when

¹ Levit. xxiii. 27.

² Ibid. iv. Cf. Archdeacon Freeman, "Principles of Divine Service," vol. ii.

³ Dan. ix. 21.

⁴ St. Luke i. 10.

golden censer in His hand, and the incense ready to "put on" for us!—if He is waiting and listening—how grievous if no voice comes up to Him for presentation from our chamber, or from the gathered household!

More powerfully still does this faith affect our offering of united prayer, to which Christ's promised Presence adds such mystic significance, and to which He has pledged such a mighty power! We speak of beautiful services and hearty services. More and more beautiful, heartier and heartier, let us seek to make them, not stinting from the honour of God's House, or scheming to offer Him in worship of that which costs us nothing. But O for the dignity of the simplest Litany which has the patronage of Christ! O for the true force of the most majestic 'Te Deum,' which has the incense of His merits to carry it into the ear of God!

But it is in the great Christian act of devotion that the correspondence between earth and Heaven is closest. And here let us take the broadest and most matter-of-fact view of the Holy Communion. Ceasing to regard for the time those aspects of it which are most precious to us, since some of our brethren cannot enter into them with us, and abstaining as far as possible from recognised and accepted terms round which a controversial feeling has gathered, let us simply try to see it as an act of worship in relation to the living Lord of us all, and His Intercession for His people.

Can any of us refuse the celebration of the Lord's Supper the character of a solemnity intended to correspond with His work above, or doubt that, while He was putting an end to the preparatory rites of the Jewish Law by fulfilling them, He instituted this as a means of more direct and effectual pleading of His one Sacrifice with the Father?

"This do," He said, "for My memorial."¹ We pass over the force, or the alleged force, of the word "do," and all the evidence which a sacrificial meaning contained in it would create. Taking Christ's words in the barest sense, that Christians are enjoined to do or perform something, let us simply ask with what design they are to perform it.

There are few persons now in the Church of England, it is to be hoped, who maintain that Christ means nothing more than that we are to eat of the bread and drink of the cup in order that the recollection of His love, His sufferings, and our obligations to Him may have a proper effect on our hearts and lives. No wonder that they who could so dissipate a Divine mystery believed preaching to be of more importance than Sacraments. Preaching, forcible and stirring word-painting, would undoubtedly be more calculated to keep in our remembrance the fact that Christ's Body was once broken and His Blood once shed, than would be the occasional breaking of a little bread by a few persons, and the drinking of a little wine. True, things which enter by the ear affect the mind more languidly than such as are submitted to our trustworthy eyes; but, then, the acted part must have some direct relation to the idea to be conveyed. This might be a fair argument for the introduction of a Passion Play, like that of

¹ The word (*ἀνάμνησις*) occurs only once in the New Testament excepting in reference to the Holy Communion (St. Luke xxii. 19; 1 Cor. xi. 24, 25). This is Heb. x. 3, where St. Paul, speaking of the sacrifices of the law, says, "In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." He means that past sins are thereby brought not merely before the mind of the worshipper but before God's sight, and He is reminded of them. It is well known that early Christian writers invariably speak of the Lord's Supper as a commemoration or memorial in this sense of its being made before God.

Ammergau, but the symbolism instituted by our Lord, if it be only symbolism, is too remote to produce much effect apart from further teaching attached to it.

More people, perhaps, chiefly among Protestant dissenters, understand "Do this in remembrance of Me" to signify "Do this to show your faith in Me." But this manifest dilution has been met beforehand by an authority which none will dispute when they see themselves brought face to face with it.

Our Lord Himself marked the importance of the words of institution by making them the subject of a special revelation to St. Paul. In all probability the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in which it is recorded, was written previously to the Gospel of St. Luke, which alone contains the words in question, while the occurrence of the revelation is spoken of as a thing long past when the Apostle sent his Epistle. And he distinctly declares, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." In the same way he says in another place, "For I delivered unto you first that which I also received;" and, "I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."¹

We have, then, in St. Paul's writing, Christ's own version of His Divine words, presenting a harmony, by anticipation, of the slightly varying accounts of the three Evangelists. In this version, be it observed, the phrase translated "in remembrance of Me" (but which should rather be rendered "for My memorial" or "for a memorial of Me") is emphatically repeated. St. Luke inserts it only after the words "This is My Body which is given for you." But

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 23, xv. 3; Gal. i. 11, 12.

here it is "Take, eat; this is My Body which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." And it is immediately added by St. Paul, who was full of the personal teaching of Christ, and who had "the mind of Christ," beyond all question, on the Sacrament which He thus ordained, "For as often as ye eat of this bread and drink of this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come."¹

The "showing," then, is not the showing of our faith, but the showing of Christ's death:² the remembrance we make is not for the awakening, or the manifestation of our own gratitude and love, but for the commemoration; the acted memorial of Himself.

To whom? Before whom?

We must remember that our Lord instituted His Holy Supper to take the place of the Jewish Passover. The time, the manner, the words used, alike prove it.³ The

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

² The word used by St. Paul (*καταγγέλλετε*) conveys at least thus much. Some (comparing it with *ἀναγγέλλω*, Deut. xxvi. 3) conceive that it conveys much more and in itself includes the idea of showing or solemnly proclaiming before Almighty God.

³ "It appears to be well agreed," says Waterland, "among the learned of all parties, that the Christian Eucharist succeeded in the place of the Jewish Passover." Having shown the analogy between the two, he points out certain resembling circumstances which concern the particular forms and phrases made use of in this institution, as marking our Lord's intention.

"1. In the Paschal Supper the master of the house took bread and blessed it in a prayer of thanksgiving to God, and the rule was never to begin the blessing till he had the bread in hand, that so the prayer of benediction directed to God might, at the same time, be understood to have re-

Passover Feast which He thus superseded was a memorial of the original Passover. The original Passover signified His own saving Sacrifice and effectual Bloodshedding. On the night of His betrayal the thing signified was taking the bread, and might draw down a blessing upon it. It is obvious to see how applicable all this is to our Lord's conduct in the first article of the institution.

"2. The breaking of the bread after the benediction was a customary practice in the Jewish feasts, only in the Paschal Feast it is said that the bread was first broken and the benediction followed. But whether our Lord varied *then* in a single circumstance, or the Jews have varied *since*, may remain a question.

"3. The distributing after benediction and fraction was customary among the Jews.

"4. The words 'This do in remembrance of Me,' making part of the institution, are reasonably judged to allude to the ancient Paschal Solemnities in which were several memorials, and the service itself is more than once called a memorial in the Old Testament.

"5. In the ancient Paschal Feast the master of the house was wont to take cup after cup into his hands (to the number of four), consecrating them one after another by a short thanksgiving; after which each consecrated cup was called a cup of blessing.

"6. At the institution of the Passover it was said, 'The blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are, and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you.' The blood was the token of the covenant in that behalf between God and His people, as circumcision before had been a token also of a like covenant, and called covenant as well as token. In the institution of the Communion our Lord says, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you, for many, for the remission of sins.' The cup is here by a figure put for wine, and covenant, according to ancient Scripture phrase, is put for token of a covenant, and wine, representative of Christ's blood, answers to the blood of the Passover, typical of the same blood of Christ, and the remission of sins here answers to the passing over there and preserving from plague. These short hints may suffice at present just to intimate the analogy between the Jewish Passover and the Christian Eucharist in the several particulars of moment here mentioned.

"7. At the Paschal Feast there was an annunciation or declaration of the great things which God had done for His people; in like manner one

place of the ancient sign : and accordingly the memorial of the ancient sign is to give way to the new memorial of the reality. "This do," He says, "for My memorial." 'The memorial of your former deliverance and of your former hopes is now to end, because it is fulfilled in Me. My memorial henceforth takes its place.'

But the annual memorial of the Passover was made "before God." It was not only a solemn recollection by which the Jews should keep in mind a past mercy, but "a Passover to the Lord," a feast "to the Lord." As the Sprinkling of the Blood upon the houses in Egypt was to be for the Lord to see, so the feast in after ages was a distinct solemnity addressed to Him. Its omission involved exclusion from God's covenant, because a man brought not the offering of the Lord in His appointed season.¹

It cannot be doubted that our Lord intended that this feature of the ancient Passover should be continued in His Sacrament.

Again, as has been elaborately shown by a living writer,² we are not to confine our Lord's allusions in the institution of His Supper to the rites of the Passover. "The eye of

design of the Eucharist is to make a *declaration* of the mercies of God in Christ—to 'show the Lord's death till He come.'

"8. Lastly, at the close of the Paschal Supper they were wont to sing a hymn of praise ; and the like was observed in the close of the institution of the Christian Eucharist, as is recorded in the Gospels.

"The many resembling circumstances, real and verbal, which I have here briefly enumerated do abundantly show that this holy Eucharist was in a great measure copied from the Paschal Feast, and was intended to supply its place, only heightening the design and improving the application." Waterland, "Review of the Doctrine of the Eucharist." Works, vol. iv. pp. 495-8.

¹ Exod. xii. 12-14 ; Deut. xvi. 2 ; Numb. ix. 13.

² Freeman, "Principles of Divine Service."

the Saviour, in pronouncing those memorable words, glanced, we cannot doubt, over the whole religious experience through which He had Himself conducted mankind." He referred to all former dispensations as His interpreters, and "doubtless the Church in reverently seeking out the meaning of His words was to take into her view no single Mosaic ordinance or ordinances, but this Mosaic dispensation in the entire extent of its sacrificial arrangements." The expressions "giving" or "offering" of the body; the allusion to shedding of blood; the eating and drinking as of a sacrificial meal; the use of "bread and wine;" the mention of a "memorial;" and of "a covenant" or "dispensation," all send us back to the study of the Jewish ritual in its various branches.

And throughout these one principle is most strongly marked. Everything was to be done "before the Lord." The Shew-bread, the Incense, the continual Burnt Offering, the Wave Offering, the Heave Offering, the Meat Offering,¹ are all ordained to represent and plead something before God Himself. They are regarded as something which, when presented by man, God is pleased to look upon, and, looking upon, to be propitious to His worshippers.

That the early Christians regarded the Lord's Supper as

¹ The meat offering (*Minchâh*) or pure offering (the unbloody sacrifice of fine flour, which was usually accompanied by the drink offering of wine) is spoken of by the prophet Malachi in language which, as Archdeacon Freeman says, "has with great consent of ancient writers and liturgies been understood of the Eucharist, and it is difficult to conceive what else it can refer to." (Vol. ii. p. 10.) "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name and a pure offering; for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Malachi i. 11.) The Hebrew word rendered "pure offering" is *Minchâh*.

no mere profession of faith before others, or means of stirring up faith in themselves; nor, again, as a mode of proclaiming and making public that Death of Christ on which they were resting their souls, is evident from their use of it in the days of persecution. Profession in public was then impossible. Their faith needed little stimulus when they were willingly suffering for Christ's sake. The confession of the lighted pile and the bloody arena preached more powerfully than could participation in any mystic rite. Nay, their recorded celebrations of the Holy Communion, which were frequent, and probably daily, contradict absolutely the modern notions assigned to it. Not in the majestic services of vast congregations, but in little companies of two or three, gathered together in the Master's name, in the secret chamber, in the retired oratory, or in the very catacombs whose tombs formed altars, and on whose walls are still found the rudely sculptured emblems of the Lamb of God, they offered this constant service. Must it not have been to them a deep reality, that secret worship, in the very face of God? The Angel of Death was hovering over their doors. The cry of lamentation was daily rising among them; for there was scarce a house where there was not one out of the brethren dead under the persecution of their cruel foes. So, like the Israelites who sought appointed safety in the Blood of the Passover, they presented before God in faith the memorial of the Saviour Who had been sacrificed for them; they sought thus the sprinkling of that precious Blood, which, if it were not to avert the stroke of temporal death, might become their passport into eternal life. They would depart (and, if we do not hold with them here, why do we crave for the Holy Communion in our last hours?) pleading before Heaven that all-

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prevailing Sacrifice, and invoking its presentation in their behalf by the Lord Who was watching over them from above.

Of course the degree of our perception of the connection which exists between the Body and Blood of the Lord and the consecrated Bread and Wine will materially affect our appreciation of the solemn nature, and of the immediate inward efficacy, of this memorial. But it is humbly suggested that a starting point of agreement is to be found in this the first view of the Eucharist. Differences will be no longer prominent in our minds when we are kneeling side by side to invoke the priestly action of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to plead with Him those merits on which all alike rely.

For ourselves, let this great act of worship ever lead on our minds to the reality of an interceding Lord.

"We are wont to conclude our prayers with, Through Jesus Christ our Lord. And this is the specification whereby the worship of a Christian is distinguished from that of the Jew. Now, that which we, in all our prayers and thanksgivings, do vocally, when we say, Through Jesus Christ our Lord, the ancient Church in her public and solemn service did visibly, by representing Him, according as He commanded, in the symbols of His Body and Blood. What time, then, so fit and seasonable to commend our devotions unto God, as when the Lamb of God lies slain (sacramentally) upon the Holy Table; and we receive visibly, though mystically, those gracious pledges of His blessed Body and Blood? This was that sacrifice of the ancient Church the Fathers so much ring in our ears—the sacrifice of Praise and Prayer through Jesus Christ, mystically represented in the creatures of bread and wine." ¹

¹ Mede's Works, B. ii. 2, p. 357.

“What Christ does in Heaven He hath commanded us to do on earth, that is, to represent His Death, to commemorate His Sacrifice, by humble prayer and thankful record, and by faithful manifestation and joyful Eucharist to lay it before the eyes of our Heavenly Father, so ministering in His Priesthood and doing according to His commandment and His example ; the Church being the image of Heaven, the Priest the Minister of Christ, the Holy Table being a copy of the celestial Altar, and the Eternal Sacrifice of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world being always the same. It bleeds no more, after the finishing of it on the Cross : but it is wonderfully represented in Heaven and graciously represented here ; by Christ’s action there, by His commandment here.”¹

To return to the general idea of this chapter. It is the faith we are speaking of which gives life to every prayer and force to every act of worship. That which we speak is spoken, that which we do is done, in unison with the word and act of the Mediator above.

It was when Stephen, “full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,” that he could pray for himself and others, regardless of all that was going on around him, and find even a cruel death changed into a peaceful sleep. Let us but see Jesus, Who sits enthroned, stand up, in the love of His Intercession, to be the mouth-piece of our prayers and the channel of our worship, and our calling upon God from our knees will become a new thing to us.

¹ Bp. Jeremy Taylor, “Worthy Communicant,” vol. xv. pp. 437-8.

XII.

THE SYMPATHISING HIGH PRIEST.

IN speaking of our Blessed Lord's qualifications for the Heavenly Priesthood, St. Paul refers, as to an essential feature in it, to His perfect sympathy with men, His ability, from His own past experience, to enter into our trials, our temptations, and our sorrows. "We have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."¹

Every High Priest, he maintains, must be a man, for he has to represent men in their relations to God,² and to offer in men's behalf. And this necessity that he should be a man arises in part from the fact that the office of the High Priest consisted not merely in performing certain outward functions, but in discriminating in the cases of offenders who sought his official aid. The High Priest had to judge, when an Israelite desired to offer a sacrifice, whether the sin for which he sought atonement came properly within the

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

² Heb. v. 1. "The right rendering is not 'Every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men;' but 'Every high priest is as one taken from among men ordained for men in their relation to God.' And it is further to be observed, that the words 'taken from among men' express the principal idea, while the proof of the necessity of this is given in the words 'ordained for men.' The form in which this proof is given is that the being taken from among men expresses the ground of the possibility of being ordained for men. Expressed in a logical form it would stand thus: Every high priest can appear before God for men only in virtue of his being taken from among men."—EBKARD, *Epistle to the Hebrews*, on ch. v.

class of sins for which a sacrifice was admissible. Offerings might be made for sins of ignorance and for casual faults into which a man might be betrayed by natural infirmity and ebullition of passion; while great and deliberately wilful wickednesses were to be punished without the opportunity of any atonement. The Priest, therefore, had carefully and firmly, yet considerately, to judge in each case how far the fault came within the prescribed conditions. He was to bring to bear a moderate and sound judgment,¹ based on his own experience of human weaknesses and frailties.²

This requirement, we are told, Christ amply fulfils, and that without any such limitation as the law imposed on the Priests. As it behoved, "He was made in all things like unto His brethren," that He might import His knowledge, gained by becoming partaker of the trials of flesh and blood, into His continual Intercession. Thus He is "a merciful as well as a faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to make reconciliation for the sins of His people."³

This brings us face to face with a great mystery, or rather with a series of mysteries.

In the first place it constrains us to realise that Christ is truly man in the truth not only of a human body but of a human soul. We most of us have difficulty in taking hold of this. A large proportion of Christians, who wish and intend to believe aright concerning the Incarnate Saviour, unconsciously fall into that heresy which makes the Divine Nature take in Him the place of the rational part of man.⁴ They do not see, until it is pointed out to them, that to deny Christ's possession of a human soul is to deny His

¹ Μετριοπαθεῖν.

³ Heb. ii. 17.

² Heb. v. 1—3.

⁴ Apollinarianism.

true Humanity. Even if we acknowledge that while on earth our Lord was really partaker of all our feelings, passions, and infirmities which are sinless (for sin is the only limit), that He loved with a human tenderness,¹ knew human anger,² was touched with human compassion,³ wept human tears,⁴ was vexed with human anxieties,⁵ had to submit a human will to a higher will,⁶ yet we make it as if the real human soul, of which these things were the results and signs, had now been lost in the perfections of His Godhead.

But we are distinctly taught that He is the same Jesus still. As to His soul, a change has indeed taken place corresponding with that which has come upon His glorified Body. As His Body is now free from all possibility of suffering, as it is no more liable to pain and death, so His Soul is no more liable to those trials which made Him "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." There is no place now for passing darkness and desolation of Spirit within Him there in the glory of Heaven.

Yet as the scars of His bodily wounds remain, so do the experiences of earth still cling to His soul. "In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."⁷

And more yet. That which He suffered on earth formed in some mysterious manner His qualification for His present work. St. Paul puts this in a very striking light.⁸ He is showing Christ's true Humanity by His capacity of human suffering. He points to Jesus in the days of His flesh enduring the agony of Gethsemane, feeling, as Man, the fear

¹ St. John xi. 5.

² St. Mark iii. 5.

³ St. Mark i. 41; St. Matt. xv. 32.

⁴ St. John xi. 45.

⁵ St. John xiii. 21.

⁶ St. Matt. xxvi. 39.

⁷ Heb. ii. 18.

⁸ Heb. v. 7, *et seq.*

of death, a death which we know was rendered unspeakably bitter by those sins for which He died. He speaks of Him as uttering prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, for the removal of the coming trial, if only such were the Father's will; and as being heard, for His prayer of reverential awe,¹ so far as to be delivered from the fear of that death to which He went forth a calm and willing Victim. Thus, though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. Though He was the Eternal Son of God, He was pleased to learn by experience of man's feelings.

And this is the result. "Being now made perfect" (that is, being perfectly fitted for His office) "He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that follow in the steps of His obedience." This is evidenced by His being saluted of God on His return to Heaven as a true High Priest; being "called of God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec."

His work as High Priest, then, is a consequence of that which He learnt in the flesh.

This brings home to us, apart from the comfort and confidence it affords, and was intended to afford, how truly Christ 'saves us by His life.'

The system of the Incarnation is, throughout, a system of self-limitation on the part of the Eternal Son of God. We have no need to shrink, as some do, from those passages of Scripture which illustrate the way in which He was pleased to "restrain the beams of Deity" in His "mystical administration." It is a mistake, as well as a fault, to do so; we thus not only give up a portion of God's Word as a spoil to unbelievers, but deprive ourselves, in each instance of such

¹ Ἀπὸ τῆς εὐλαβείας.

abandonment, of a portion of that light which Revelation offers.

We are apt to treat in this way the Gospel statement that Jesus increased in wisdom as in stature. We are afraid lest it should seem to go against the doctrine of His very and eternal Godhead which is so dear to us. But nothing can be more injurious to the Faith than to pass over such declarations, unless it be to explain them in an unreal and dishonest way. There the words stand on the sacred page. God's truth needs none of our evasions or our subtleties. There is nothing to fear for it in full exposure to the light and the most searching examination.

Is it really satisfactory to any of us to be told by commentators, even if they be usually great and trustworthy, that the statement that Jesus increased in wisdom, means that there was in Him a gradual appearance, or manifestation, of increasing wisdom in the eyes of men? Are we to suppose that there was only a gradual appearance or manifestation of bodily growth in the Lord, and that He was after all only the phantom which some of old time made Him out to be, for remember, that which applies to His growth in one way, applies to His growth in the other? "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature."¹

There is another passage which suffers from our timid treatment of it. Speaking of the Judgment day, He says, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."² He here simply tells us what St. Paul tells us, as we have seen, of His mental sufferings, and what St.

¹ St. Luke ii. 52. Ἰησοῦς πρόεκοπτε σοφία καὶ ἡλικία (stature of body in proportion to His years).

² St. Mark xiii. 32.

Luke tells us of His progress in holy childhood, namely, that the Son of God, very God of very God, was pleased, on becoming Incarnate, to impose bounds upon Himself in accordance with the truth of the human nature which He had taken. How and where the line was drawn, we need not inquire, and the inquiry would be in vain. To seek to know how the omniscience of God and ignorance as man could exist at the same time in a single person, is as much beyond us, but *not more beyond* us, as it is to know how God could be born, and how God could die; how He, Who is everywhere, could 'localize Himself in His entirety in Jesus Christ,' and how He, Who is incapable of suffering, could suffer in the garden and on the Cross.

In each case the answer is, It was as Man. Beyond this we cannot speak. We shall not know more until the time comes when we who now see through a glass darkly, shall see the Truth face to face.

Meanwhile the fact that these limitations were imposed upon Himself, and so faithfully maintained, by the Son of God when He was on earth, together with the fact that He is pleased to refer to them, and represent Himself as acting upon their results in Heaven, is one of the utmost importance to our view of Him as He is to us.

It not only awakens many touching thoughts and impresses upon us the assurance of a sympathy which is most consolatory and encouraging, but it opens to us His purposed method as regards ourselves. The recorded events of His life had a future purpose. His temptation, for example, to which St. Paul immediately refers, was not merely an occasion of victory over Satan by Christ, as our representative, so that the second Adam in the wilderness might repair the damage inflicted by the fall of the first Adam in the garden; or an

acted promise to us of ability, through Him, to overcome in our season of trial, but an actual schooling, if we may so speak, to which the Lord mysteriously submitted Himself that He might make use of its experience in the administration of His future Kingdom. He learnt the weakness of our nature in this portion of His suffering. It is not the outward and miracle-attended approach of Satan, who came in the, hour of Christ's faintness and weariness, to afflict Him with suggestions of evil, but rather the mental trial, through which the Son of Man then passed, which gives the forty days and forty nights their deep significance. The accompaniments of the scene are in themselves most striking. There He was with "the wild beasts" for His only companions. To see the Lord of our Life keeping watch, day after day and night after night, in that desolate tract of the valley of the Jordan ; His path crossed only, if the lion had then disappeared, by the Syrian bear, as it found its way from its haunts in the mountains of Lebanon ; and night made hideous round Him by the weird cry of the hyena and the jackal ; to picture Him kneeling on the bleak hill side with hands clasped and eyes upraised in prayer, or wandering to and fro in some of those deep ravines, or among the clefts of the rocks and the tops of the ragged rocks, hungry, faint, weary, lost, and, as it would seem, forgotten by the few to whom He was known as the strange young Carpenter of Nazareth, is sufficiently moving. But this is but a small part of His trial. So far the words of Job are being fulfilled in Him, "At famine Thou shalt laugh ; neither shalt Thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth. For Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field ; and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with Thee."¹ The great thought is

¹ Job v. 22, 23.

that in that terrible loneliness, He was painfully preparing for a work He had undertaken to discharge for us, and by His suffering, qualifying Himself to urge before the Father His own plea for His people, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak."¹

Again ; we may see (in all reverence be it said) how He gave Himself up to the sinless feelings of His human nature and the completeness with which, in His earthly course, He learnt to identify Himself with us His members—in His tears for the death of Lazarus. Why did Jesus when He saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, groan in spirit and be troubled ? Why did He Himself give way, as we term it, when He found Himself in the midst of the band of mourners ? It was because, in assuming our nature, the Son of God had invested Himself with a new set of attributes, namely those of our flesh, in order that thoughts, feelings, affections might be His which could respond to ours, and form the basis of that sympathy which He should continually exhibit when that nature was exalted to the right hand of God.

Though He sheds no actual tears now, we see in this how our tears touch Him, and how the sound of our weeping goes at once to His Divine heart. Thus the wonderful thought comes home to us that He, Who might bring to bear on our cases the power of a Divine Omniscience, is pleased rather to regulate His action in our behalf by knowledge and feeling experimentally gathered. His thoughts go back to the incidents of His earthly life, and He sees us, as we draw near to Him, in the light with which the memories and experiences of that life surround us.

We are thus not only reminded of the full reality of His

¹ St. Matt. xxvi. 41.

present Manhood, but assured that it is through that Manhood, and not by a purely spiritual process, or by exertion of the power of His Godhead alone, that He lives to save us. He is still human in body and soul; and, amid all His glory, identifies Himself with us, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and, in a measure, bears our griefs and carries our sorrows still. Though sinless Himself, He is one at heart with us sinful men.

We are thinking in these pages of that which Christ is to us, and may not—for it would occupy treatise upon treatise—pause to dwell on that which the revelation of His love in its several aspects should cause us to be towards Him. We are not attempting a series of practical sermons, but rather seeking to see how the Son of God reveals Himself in His Word as an object external to ourselves. If we take hold of this, the practical lessons present themselves to our minds as a matter of course. To be able to come to One with Whom we can plead His own experience of the weakness of our nature; Who has Himself, as our Representative, made trial of our temptations and our difficulties; Who has felt the weight of sin, though Himself free from its taint, and Who can enter into our sorrows because “there never was sorrow like unto His sorrow,”—not only cuts off from us all excuse for seeking help elsewhere, and from making false excuses before Him for our wrong-doing, but binds us to Him, as with a living bond, in a full assurance of His deepest consideration. If the consciousness that an earthly friend enters heartily into our case is so soothing, what must be the sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ?

But the fact of His condescension is the great cause for thankful wonder. This is the mystery; that “as Christ took Manhood that it might be capable of death whereunto He

humbled Himself, so because Manhood is the proper subject of compassion and feeling pity, which maketh the sceptre of Christ's regency, even the Kingdom of Heaven, amiable, He Which without our nature could not on earth suffer for the sins of the world, doth now also by means thereof both make intercession to God for sinners and exercise dominion over all men with a true, a natural, and a sensible touch of mercy."¹

Many of our trials and temptations arise from the natural weakness of our body—weakness, that is, as distinguished from sinful inclinations and propensities in which the Sinless One could have no share. Such are want of energy in God's service; inability to rouse ourselves to spiritual exertion, or to persist in schemes of self-discipline; distractions in prayer—going to sleep, perhaps, at our prayers; the effects of bodily sickness; the influence of our general health on our spirits and power of sustained thought; the dread of physical pain; and the natural fear of death. Here, and in many other ways, "the corruptible body presseth down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that museth on many things."² What a thought it is that He Who as God knoweth whereof we are made, and Who in His Divine compassion "remembereth that we are but dust," recalls His own similar experiences where He might exercise only His general Omniscience; similar, that is, in the sensations endured, but not in the effect produced. Bodily sickness we are not told that He Himself suffered from. Sickness is a portion of the consequences of sin, and of that imperfection and disturbance in which the perfect and pattern Man could

¹ Hooker, Eccl. Pol. Bk. V. ch. li. 3.

² Wisdom ix. 15.

have no share. Bodily weakness too, though it troubled Him, never caused Him to fail as it does ourselves. It never produced even the wish to deviate from the holy path in which He walked. But the sense of it added to the perfection of His self-sacrifice.

As He felt this weakness on earth so He remembers it in our favour now. As He sees us faint and fail, He goes back, we may believe, in thought, to that evening when, thirsty and weary after a day's work and toilsome journey, He sat by the well at Sychar. Though He relaxed not even then from His Father's business, but spoke of the water of life to the sinful woman of Samaria, yet He was suffering from a depression through fatigue which He recognises as an excuse for us. And in the same way, we may believe, He applies the sensations to which at various times He was subject. That which He saw, though He was never subjected to the like, of human disease and its distracting influence ; that which He felt of human disappointment, human apprehension, and human shrinking from death ; the sigh which preceded His " Ephphatha " in the coasts of Decapolis ; the sensation of loneliness when the disciples forsook Him and fled ; the sorrow of soul, even unto death, which overtook Him on the night of the betrayal ; and the Agony itself, when human instinct drew Him one way, and His perfect obedience and perfect holiness, which of course triumphed, drew Him another—to these His memory refers, and from His own victorious struggles He deduces a merciful allowance for our unhappy failures.

Then the Temptation itself. How does its recollection excite Him, so to speak, into active care for us when we are tempted by the direct approaches of Satan ! Though

secure against it Himself, the horribleness of such contact must have most strongly excited His indignation and abhorrence, and all the more so because, in His perfection as the Holy One of God, He *was* secure against it. He, in the wilderness, was assailed by evil in its typical forms. By the lust of the flesh, by the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, Satan sought to drag Him down. Some say, How can Christ sympathise with us sinners under these assaults since He Himself was sinless? He cannot indeed sympathise in our remorse and repentance when we have fallen and arise again ; but He can sympathise with us in the dreadfulness of the trial of a human soul, and in those elements of weakness which humanity involves. It is because He is sinless that He knows best the dreadfulness of sin. It is because He knows best sin's dreadfulness that He shudders to see us even near to it.

He remembers, then, His own conflict in ours. "The devil came to Him." He sees it all over again when the devil comes to us. The suffering of the forty days, the hated presence, the stones of the wilderness, the pinnacle of the Temple, the panorama of this world's kingdoms, the flight of the evil one, and the welcome ministry of Holy Angels, all rise up before Him. And, as He calls upon us to resist, He is ready to impart to us of His own courage, grace, and strength. From the crafts and assaults of the devil, by His own Temptation, He, our good Lord, will deliver us.

XIII.

THE GIFT OF REPENTANCE.

ST. PETER, before the Council, tells us that one object of Christ's exaltation as a Prince and a Saviour is "to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins."¹

We most of us feel the need of this gift. They who have set themselves in the most direct and earnest way to come to God with a true sorrow of heart, will be the first to confess their comparative failure. Our repentance consists chiefly in a conviction that we ought to be repenting, and in a desire to find ourselves repenting. We may have a clear view of the science of Repentance, and be well acquainted with the orthodox rules which divines have framed for its practice, such as sorrow for sin, confession of sin, reliance on Christ's merits for its pardon, steadfast resolution against it, and a course of consistent obedience by the aid of the Holy Spirit. As a beginning, we endeavour to stir our souls by the thought of God's threatenings, or to soften them by the remembrance of His mercies. And so we seek to come into His Presence in a distinct act of Repentance. But a sense of disappointment comes over us. We remain, perhaps, on our knees; we urge ourselves with moving words of confession and supplication; we try to throw ourselves into the spirit of such language as that of the fifty-first Psalm; we wait for the flow of penitential sorrow, but we wait in vain; we long to weep, but the tears will not come; we go on saying our prayers, but without any warmth

¹ Acts v. 31.

of devout feeling. There is no really grievous remembrance, no sense of the intolerable burden we speak of, no eager craving for mercy. If we have resolution to persevere morning after morning, evening after evening, perhaps through a whole Lent, there seems to be no voice, neither any to answer, and we are half tempted by Satan to imitate the despair of the disappointed priests of Baal, and leap upon the altar which we have made.

At best, grieved at finding our feelings untouched, we go on putting constraint upon ourselves, with a Repentance which is of the reason and not of the heart.

It is much the same with us towards God as it sometimes is with people who wish to feel as they ought to do when a death has taken place in their family. They are dissatisfied with themselves because they are not stricken with a lively grief. They put down the blinds of their houses ; they move about softly and speak in whispers. Most likely they do not meet as usual for meals, or, if they do, they eat and drink in silence, or converse in a constrained and formal way. And this is no hypocrisy. They do not wish to deceive any one ; possibly they confess, to those who know them best, their vexation at their failure, and they certainly do their utmost to realise the sorrow of which their outward behaviour ought to be the natural expression. But the tender feeling is not there, though they almost hate themselves for the lack of it.

So with our repentance. We do not get beyond the preliminary stages, or the constrained performance of some of its accompanying duties. Not that these things are to be abandoned as useless. Outward rules and efforts at self-restraint are better than indifference, just as the quiet of a house of mourning is more becoming and more

Christian-like than mirth and festivity in the presence of the dead. And further, outward rules and resolutions not only indicate a will which would fain rise to something better, but they are a help, by God's blessing, towards it. Self-denial and serious effort are not grace ; but it is when we are seeking to order our conversation aright that we are most likely to be shown the salvation of God.

But what if St. Peter points out to us a real way of obtaining that which we desire ; if he tells us of something which will touch the heart we find so dead, and quicken the feelings which flow as yet so sluggishly !

He speaks of repentance as the gift of Christ in glory. He tells even those who slew and hanged the Lord Jesus, that He lives, not, as they were beginning to fear, in order to avenge Himself on His enemies, but to give repentance, and, in repentance, pardon.

Repentance, then, is the gift of Christ exalted.

How is it so ?

We should have imagined that He would rather be described as giving it from His Cross ; that it would be at that great sight we should be led to smite upon our breasts, and return unto Him with hearts full of love and awe.

But no ! " Him hath God exalted . . . to give repentance."

How does He give it ?

Not merely because His presence in Heaven assures us that His sacrifice is accepted in our behalf. We have already noticed how such a mode of explaining direct statements weakens and dilutes God's Word. We are told that Christ is in Heaven to give us repentance, not only to show us that it may be given.

Nor is it sufficient to say that Christ glorified gives repentance, because, being glorified, He gives us the Holy Spirit to produce it. Most true it is that the Holy Spirit is ever the agent of a real repentance. He puts into our minds the good desires, and brings the same to good effect. Most true it is that without the gift of the Spirit the gift of repentance never will be ours. But it is evidently in immediate connection with Christ's present life, a connection more immediate than the gift of the Spirit at large involves, that the gift of repentance comes to us.

Again, it may be said, and truly, that the living Saviour gives us repentance in that His life as Man is the condition of that continuous Mediation by which alone man can have access to God, or communication from God. Our sorrow needs this channel by which to reach the Divine heart: our confession this conveyance to the Divine ear: our resolution this recommendation to the Divine source of grace.

But the great way in which Christ gives us repentance is by vouchsafing us a sight of Himself as He is now in His glory. It is to Him St. Peter would lead the hostile Jews. He points to the Crucified One that they may see Him stretching forth the hand of mercy from His throne. The sight of Him Whom they pierced must some time or other draw from them the wail of sorrow. Is it to be when He cometh with clouds, and they cannot choose but see Him, or is it to be, accepting it as a gift, in repentance now? If they will only raise their eyes it is a gift He is ready to bestow.

We know how the sight of Jesus brought one enemy to His feet. It was not the blinding light from Heaven which converted Saul on the way to Damascus. It was not the

glory that burst upon him which transfigured his life into holiness. It was the tender pleading voice of Jesus, and the vision of Jesus which struck him speechless then, and sent him forth not only an eager worker, but a lifelong penitent. Visions and revelations, gifts and graces of the Spirit without measure, unexampled power in bringing souls to Christ, never banished from St. Paul's remembrance that sorrowful loving look of His Saviour's face. In the height of his authority and in the fulness of his success, his sin was ever before him, not because he feared punishment, for the Lord was showing him how He had put that sin away, but because he could never forget Whom in his ignorance and unbelief he had wounded. He felt himself "chief of sinners," "the least of all the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle because I persecuted the Church of God."¹

We spoke of dulness of heart under circumstances of earthly sorrow. It may be some of us remember how our better and truer feeling came at last; how the tears, which would not flow at our mere formal call, rushed all at once unbidden into our eyes; and how the grief which sense of decency and propriety, and even self-reproach could not engender, sprang up spontaneously when we least expected it. It was when, as if by magic, some look, some word of the dead came back upon us; when we saw him as he was to us; as he smiled on us; or as his face saddened over for some pain or shame we had caused him; when for a moment he was with us again, no mere name, no vague memory, but real and true, a part of our present selves! Nay, draw up the blinds now, if you will, and speak as nature prompts you! There is no further need of forcing and self-constraint; or, if you continue the outward signs, it

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 9.

will be not as a matter of rule and obligation, but by the natural instinct of a respectful love !

So is it when, by faith, we really view Jesus at the right hand of God. Only see Him there, Christian brother or sister, as He intercedes for you ; see Him there as He utters your name before the Throne ; there where, the good Shepherd, He yearns after you His wandering sheep, and longs to gather you into the safe fold ; there as for you He stands marked with the wounds your sins helped to inflict, waiting and watching, the very joy of Heaven dimmed for Him—if ever so it can be—by your miserable doings on earth ; there, as almost a shudder passes over His glorious frame as He sees you whom He loves on the brink of some dreadful, shameful sin ; there, as the smile of love lights up His face as He bends forward to welcome you when you show symptoms of drawing near, and stretches forth the hand of help to aid your tottering steps ;—only truly see Him thus, and bitter sorrow for the sins by which you have grieved Him, longing after the holiness in which you may be united to Him—change of heart, feeling, temper, life, habit, inclination, will not be far off. Repentance, by the power of His grace, will become a very necessity of your being.¹

¹ It is observable how repentance virtually disappears from the system of those who represent all as depending on a mental reference to the Cross, and who disregard the present action of Christ. Appropriating to themselves, as they conceive, a pardon already bestowed, instead of seeking it through an Atonement which the Saviour lives continually to apply, a preparatory state of mind on their part seems an affront against the freedom of the Divine forgiveness. Conversion is deemed to be a single spiritual act which separates a man from all responsibility for the past, and almost, as it is sometimes preached, from the need of carefulness for the future.

XIV.

THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

OUR view of the work of Christ would be as incomplete, if we did not speak of the gift of the Holy Spirit, as it would be unprofitable if we did not enjoy it.

In one sense this gift is the most important of all the consequences of our Lord's exaltation ; for it is by the Holy Ghost He carries on His work towards us, and brings about the results of His work within us. The outward administration of His Grace, and the inward operations by which we respond to it, fall alike within the province of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity.

There was a meaning pause between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost. Communication with their Master was not indeed suspended, but the Apostles were waiting for that promise of the Father by which they should be endued with power from on High, and for that gift of the Son by which His word should begin to take effect at their mouths. He Whose influences had been previously bestowed irregularly and in measure, was now, through Him Who came that they might have life, to be shed upon them more abundantly. By the Spirit's extraordinary gifts (to adopt the old classification) Christ's kingdom was to be established ; by His ecclesiastical gifts it was to be carried on ; by His ordinary gifts Christ's members were to receive that inward and quickening power which must precede union with their Lord.

In speaking, then, of Christ's present work the agency

of the Holy Spirit is throughout assumed, just as the presence of light is assumed when we describe a beautiful landscape; and for our own availing of ourselves of that work the indwelling of the Spirit is assumed, just as the power of breathing must be taken for granted when we urge a man to the pursuit of something which requires physical exertion.

But a treatise on the action of the Holy Spirit is impossible here. We must needs confine our thoughts to one or two points which bear upon its relation to our immediate subject. There is no need to go over the well-known ground of its direct connection with our Lord's Ascension into Heaven, or to collect Scripture testimony to the fact that it was when He went up on high "leading captivity captive," as a conqueror of old rode in triumph to the capitol with his enemies bound before his chariot, that He gave these gifts to men, as a conqueror scattered his largess among the joyful multitude.¹ His own words are sufficiently plain.²

Let us rather address ourselves to a certain confusion of thought into which some good people appear to fall with respect to the work of the Holy Ghost.

They have difficulty in reconciling what Scripture says of the present action of the Holy Spirit, with the present action of Christ.

Many amongst us seem to be under a kind of impression that the lifetime of the world has been divided by the Divine wisdom into three unequal portions, and that each Person of the Trinity has selected His portion during which He alone should place Himself in relation with mankind. The period from the Creation to the Birth of Christ is assigned by them to God the Father. The three and thirty

¹ Ephes. iv. 8.

² St. John xvi. 7.


years of His life on earth belong to the Son. From Pentecost to the present hour, and henceforward to the second coming of Christ, is given to the Holy Ghost. And this view obtains so strongly, that the action of One Divine Person out of His (supposed) allotted period, would be regarded, and almost resented, as the invasion of the province of Another. It has been urged, for example, as a serious objection to the doctrine of our Lord's Presence in the Holy Communion, that it would be an interference with the dispensation of the Spirit.

Now it may be objected at once to any such idea that, consistently carried out, it must land us in a virtual Tritheism ; or, since extremes meet, it might tend to the opposite heresy of Sabellianism, and make the Three Persons of the Godhead to be only so many characters or manifestations in which one God is pleased at different times to reveal Himself.

Happily, though, we are not in the habit of following our loose ideas to their logical conclusions. A devout inconsistency saves many a man from actual error.

But inaccuracy of thought and failure to grasp the true proportion of faith must result in spiritual loss. Scattered rays, even if not distorted by false media, cannot compare with the full and clear light of the sun. To leave out a single part from a full musical harmony must mar the intended effect of the composer. This applies to even details of the truth ; much more when error touches the nature of God Himself.

And the error referred to, where it has not robbed men of their faith in the Holy Trinity, has given an air of unreality to the Gospel scheme. The Incarnation of the Son has become a passing event, or a thing which ceased to be of



immediate practical interest when Christ's part on earth ended. In some religious systems the Man Christ Jesus is regarded so exclusively as a blessed memory, and His work of Reconciliation so absolutely as the work of a by-gone day, that His Person recedes into the background, and the union of God and man becomes the union of man with the Holy Ghost, and not with the Incarnate Mediator. We are saved, indeed, according to such view, for the sake of that which Christ once did, but not by His present life; unless it be that we are thus assured of the presence of the new principle by which the work is really achieved. And, inasmuch as this new principle is inward in its operation, our own inward feelings and experiences gradually take the place of an active external Christ; and the Lord is superseded by a faith which professes solely to look to Him, as completely as He is supposed to be superseded elsewhere by men's reliance on their own good works.

The true doctrine of God's word, as we must all see when we come to look more closely into the matter, is that the action of the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity is not the independent action, now of one now of another, but the operation of one Divine will throughout. The acts and presence of One Person imply, and do not exclude, those of the others. "Thus does the whole Blessed Trinity combine in the merciful work of man's salvation. Its ultimate principle is the love of the Everlasting Father. It is carried into effect through the merciful condescension of the Eternal Son, who has exalted Manhood into God. In this process is the Holy Ghost the quickening Agent."¹

Nor can there be any fear of clashing (if we may use the

¹ Wilberforce, *Doctrine of the Eucharist*, p. 288.

term without irreverence) between the agency of the Incarnate Son and that of the Holy Spirit.

It is never represented to us in Scripture that the Holy Spirit comes on an independent mission, or that we are to regard Him, as has been well said, as coming to us "in the mere simplicity of His infinite Deity." We are not joined to God by Him immediately. He joins us to Christ, and in Christ we are joined to God. It is the province which He is pleased to assume to co-operate in the application and extension of the Incarnation as He co-operated in the Incarnation itself. "When God the Son came as Jesus," says Bishop Andrewes, "the Spirit conceived Him. When He came as Christ, the Spirit anointed Him. When He came in water at His Baptism, the Spirit was there—came down in the shape of a dove, rested, abode on Him. When He came in Blood, at His Passion, there too it was the Eternal Spirit of God by which He offered Himself without spot to God."¹ It may be added that He was also "quickened in the Spirit;"² and that "the same Spirit" "raised Jesus from the dead."³ And this action continues on the same principle. As it was in the old creation, so is it in the new; as in the generation of the heavens and the earth, so in the regeneration of mankind. By "the Word" were all things made; but the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. So now that we are created anew, the same Spirit is the agent. He carries on Christ's work. Christ's bodily presence is withdrawn, and the Spirit is accordingly come amongst us; but He is come not to supply the place of an absent Christ, but to bring a spiritually present Christ. 'Christ comes in His coming.'

¹ Bp. Andrewes' Sermons, vol. iii. xiii.

² 1 St. Pet. iii. 18.

³ Rom. viii. 11.

Thus we find Him termed "the Spirit of Christ," "the Spirit of the Son," "the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Our Lord says, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine." "He shall bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak." He is to convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; not by teaching abstract lessons on these solemn realities, but by producing conviction in relation to unbelief in Christ, to the Ascension of Christ, to the victory of Christ. Again, "By one Spirit we are baptized into one Body," but the Body is Christ's. When we eat Christ's flesh and drink His Blood, it is the Spirit that quickeneth. The Spirit is life to us, because by Him Christ is in us. St. Paul prays for the Ephesians that they may be strengthened mightily by God's Spirit in the inner man; "that Christ may thus dwell in their hearts by faith."¹ So close is the connection between the work of the Spirit and the Incarnation of Christ, that Christ, when spoken of by St. Paul as the last Adam, is Himself called a quickening or life-giving Spirit;² but we know that our mortal bodies, which are here referred to, shall "be quickened by His Spirit which dwelleth in us."³ "And so in other similar complexities of expression, all of which point to an intimate combination of operations which are nevertheless distinct."⁴

It may safely, then, be said, "Although the Holy Ghost, or Third Person in the Trinity, doth immediately and by personal propriety work faith and other spiritual graces

¹ Compare Phil. i. 19; Rom. viii. 9; 1 St. Pet. i. 11; St. John xvi. 14; xiv. 26; xvi. 13, 8—11; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Rom. viii. 20; Ephes. iii. 16.

² 1 Cor. xv. 45.

³ Rom. viii. 11.

⁴ Cf. Archer Butler, *Sermons*, 1st Series, p. 358.

in our souls, yet doth He not by these spiritual graces unite our souls and spirits immediately unto Himself, but unto Christ's human nature."¹ "To regard the actings of the Holy Ghost as directed into any other channel, would be to suppose that there was some other name than that of Christ given under Heaven whereby we might be saved."²

Thus while the action of the Holy Ghost is absolutely necessary in order to our knowledge of Christ, to our membership in Him, and to our ultimate benefit from His work, Christ Incarnate is the predominant idea throughout the New Testament. Christianity itself is not a formal announcement of the nature of the Godhead. Only the veil is raised (and thus the doctrine of the Trinity appears) so far as is necessary to display the Divine scheme of the Incarnation. When that scheme was only in preparation, the great idea of the Divine Unity, as contradistinguished from the polytheism and varied idolatries of the outer world, was sufficient for the enlightenment of God's people. When Christ came, and the Holy Spirit followed to supplement and carry out His work, the truth, which had lain hid in the older system, was brought into the light, and incidentally, but not formally, presented for men's acceptance. But we do not know all as yet. We know the fact of the Trinity in Unity, but we are not told, and our faculties do not enable us to discover, the mode of the Divine subsistence. This is a mystery the solution of which we must not expect until we are admitted into the beatific vision of God. Hence the error of those who demand a religious creed which is capable of actual demonstration, and of those who would make the knowledge we possess contradict the very purpose

¹ Dean Jackson's Works, vol. iv. 12.

² Wilberforce on the Incarnation, p. 292.

for which we possess it. The Gospel by which we are enlightened is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To argue from anything that is told us of the Third Person of the Trinity against the administration of the Second, is to assume that a full knowledge of the Infinite Being is laid open to our view, and to turn the light which we enjoy against the very revelation of love for the sake and in the process of which that light is vouchsafed to us.

XV.

CHRIST'S CONSTANT CARE.

WE are attempting a few thoughts on our Blessed Lord's work in our behalf, and not a complete treatise on the Scripture revelation of His present love. It must not be supposed, therefore, that we are insensible to many gracious illustrations of that love, because they are not separately dwelt on.

For example, there is a very striking class of texts in which we are spoken of as being saved, not so much by that which Christ does, as by that which He is. The word 'saved' is thus used, as is plain, in two senses. By that which He is we are saved potentially as it is termed, that is, the possibility of salvation is provided, and an efficacy towards it produced; while by that which He does, and which is a consequence of that which He is, He saves us actually by application of His salvation.

It is our salvation in the latter of these senses we are now rather considering: we must not, however, altogether pass over passages in which the mystical identity of Christ

with His members, and the completeness (to repeat words which have been previously quoted) with which, occupying man's nature, He acts for and represents the entire human race, are so beautifully brought before us.

When He says to His disciples, and through them to His Church at large, "I go to prepare a place for you,"¹ we know that He does not mean that He goes to busy Himself with the arrangement of a local Heaven. Heaven is already prepared in the eternal Presence of God. He means that He goes to prepare it *for us*, to procure our admission into it. In a word, He thus describes that which we have been trying to trace out, and tells us how, by the process of Intercession and the application of His redemptive power, He, having overcome the sharpness of death, will open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

But, besides this, His very Presence in Heaven has an efficacy in itself.

This is taught us by St. Paul. He speaks of hope as an anchor of the soul made fast in Christ where He has entered within the veil as our "Forerunner" in virtue of His priestly office.² As in Aaron's acceptance Israel was accepted before God; as in his presence in the Holy of Holies the people was mystically presented (a fact symbolised by his breastplate of twelve precious stones arranged according to the order of the camp of Israel, each stone having the name of a tribe engraved upon it³), so, in His Incarnate Son, God sees not only the Man Christ Jesus but the representative Man who carries in His own person our redeemed Humanity.

The same idea is conveyed when our Lord is called "the

¹ St. John xiv. 2.

² Heb. vi. 20.

³ Exod. xxviii. 15—21.

first-born among many brethren ;" "the first-begotten of the dead ;" and "the first-fruits."¹

The offering of the first-born, whether of man or of cattle, was intended to include and cover the rest of a family, or of an Israelite's stock of cattle. The "first-begotten of the dead" implies a living train to follow.

The principle of the First-fruits was that a part was taken to represent the whole, and in the acceptance of that part the whole was sanctified. This was shown in the offering of the "wave-sheaf."² Until it was presented, the fruits of the earth were held to be unclean and unfit for use. A single sheaf taken out of the harvest was lifted up aloft by the priest and waved to and fro before the Lord. It was thus made holy, and in its holiness all the produce of the field became holy also. The rule was, "If the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy."

Thus St. Paul marks what Christ is for us. The resurrection of His Body is the resurrection of ours. That which He has undergone involves us also. This principle is asserted by Christ Himself with reference to the same instance of its application. He did not say to Martha, 'I am the cause of the Resurrection and the Giver of Life,' or, 'My Resurrection and My Life which I am about to presignify, and My power to effect which I am about to exercise beforehand, are the pledge and assurance of those of mankind ;' but "I am the Resurrection and the Life ;" 'My Resurrection and My Life are yours.'

Accordingly, Christians are said to be already in Heaven with Christ, not merely in hope and affection, but in a mysterious reality. "God, who is rich in mercy, for His

¹ Rom. xiii. 29 ; Col. i. 18 ; Rev. i. 5 ; 1 Cor. xv. 20—23.

² Lev. xxiii. 9—14.

great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”¹

We should be ungrateful, too, if we passed by without thankful mention the assurance of our Saviour's watchful care over us. Beyond that care which He is ever exercising for our salvation, He is looking down upon us each one with a look of tender personal interest. He not only desires our welfare as those for whom He died and lives, longing to see in us the travail of His soul and to be satisfied, but He regards His people with a love which is faintly reflected in a good man's unselfish affection for his friend.

When He speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd, and describes His varied offices of tender guardianship, we are not to suppose that He intends to limit them to the brief remaining period of His visible sojourn on earth. He points to a future work in the tending of His sheep, and, if the central act of His pastoral love was to be the laying down of His life in their behalf, He declares that He lays it down that He may take it again, to continue His purpose with a new claim on His servants' love, and with the acquisition of a new power to be exercised for their benefit.²

And what but their experience of the faithfulness of this promise made the image of the Good Shepherd so dear to the hearts of His saints and martyrs? It was the favourite emblem to which they clung in the dark hour of persecution. On gems and seals and fragments of glass, and other early relics, Christ is found represented as carrying one of His sheep upon His shoulders. The same appears in bas-reliefs

¹ Ephes. ii. 4—6.

² St. John x.

on sarcophagi, and in paintings in the catacombs. The chalice of the Holy Communion was continually adorned by this expressive symbol.¹ Was it not because those early Christians found Him to be in truth such as He had described Himself? The Lord was indeed their Shepherd, so that while walking through the very valley of the shadow of death, under the comfort of His rod and staff, they feared no evil. In the very face of their enemies He prepared His own table for them; and the cup of their happiness and peace was full, even when they knew that the lions and the burning pile were close at hand.

About a hundred years after the birth of our Lord, and therefore, in round numbers, seventy after His Ascension,² there existed on the western sea-board of what was later known as Asia Minor seven cities each containing Churches of Christian disciples organised under their respective chief officers. The whole area of the province which contained them did not exceed a hundred square miles, and, important as some of them were in those times, their entire population probably did not exceed that of one of our great manufacturing districts. But the Churches themselves by no means comprised the bulk of the inhabitants. Ephesus, for example, favoured as it had been by the labours of St. Paul and the episcopate of Timothy, aided by the work of Aquila and Priscilla, Apollos and Tychicus, was in the main heathen, and was still the great seat of the worship of the goddess Diana. Its Church is not spoken of as the "Church of Ephesus" as if a diocese were already formed, and a terri-

¹ See Archbp. Trench on Parables, p. 383.

² The date of St. John's vision in Patmos is probably A.D. 96. Our Lord ascended (His birth having taken place four years before the 'Christian era') A.D. 28.

torial title attached to it, but as the Church 'in Ephesus.'¹ And probably when the number of Christians in Smyrna and the five other Churches is included, the total would not exceed the population of one of our own large parishes.

Yet the Lord Jesus Christ was watching these little communities from Heaven, and He revealed Himself in a vision of inconceivable majesty to St. John in the Isle of Patmos that His own words of encouragement and warning might be conveyed to each of them. It is a wonderful thought that the Son of God should open Heaven for the sake of these struggling and failing Asian Christians; but it is greater still that from Heaven He had been taking anxious note of all their doings, and framed His messages to fit the circumstances of their little lives, and the weaknesses of their little minds. His words are those not of mere exhortation grounded on the temptations which are common to men, and on the fiery trials through which believers in so many places had to pass, but they take in a variety of local occurrences, and display a complete local knowledge. Their behaviour in reference to the corruptions of sects which are so obscure that but for the mention of them here they would have been unnoticed in Church history; definite irregularities and defilements, together with the assurance of His precise reckoning of faithful and unfaithful members in a particular community—these things give an awful reality to the idea of the close and anxious oversight of the great Shepherd and Bishop of men's souls.²

But the most touching thing of all is the mention of Antipas, whom Jesus recognises as His own martyr.³ He appears to have been a member of the Church of Pergamos,

¹ The Greek is, *τῇ ἀγγέλῳ τῇς ἐν Ἐφέσῳ ἐκκλησίας.*

² Rev. ii. iii.

³ Rev. ii. 13.

and to have been slain in some persecution of extraordinary severity. But no human writer would have immortalised that name; no human record survives of his sufferings for his Lord. Overpowering as the thought is, that Lord Himself becomes the historian of His servant's faith.¹ We are accustomed to the idea of Christ's general teaching. He tells us of heavenly things, and in our dulness we fail to appreciate His condescension, and neglect to snatch eagerly at His every spoken syllable; but it brings Him—it brings our Saviour and our God—very near to us when we hear of a man like ourselves, who lived and died on earth, for the first and only time from the mouth of the Lord in Heaven.

It is little to say that this tells us how Christ sees now all the incidents that befall us one by one; how He remembers where man forgets; how not only is the death of His saints right dear in His sight, but our daily life, our daily taking up of the Cross to follow Him, or our daily coldness and carelessness, is noted with joy or with pain, so thoroughly does He identify Himself with us His brethren. This single mention does more—it makes Christ

¹ "Of Antipas, except from the glorious record which the Lord bears to him here, we know absolutely nothing. It is difficult to understand the silence of all ecclesiastical history respecting so famous a martyr, one singled out by Christ to such honour as this; for silent in respect of him ecclesiastical history must be confessed to be; that which Tertullian (Scorp. 12) and other early writers tell us about him, being merely devised 'in fugam vacui,' and manifestly drawn from the passage before us. They *know* nothing about him except what they find here. Later Latin Martyrologies of course know a great deal. According to these he was bishop of Pergamum, and by command of Domitian was shut up, Perillus-like, in a brazen bull, afterwards made red hot, and by this painful passage entered into life."—ARCHBP. TRENCH, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches*, p. 119.

real in His oversight of us. It brings Him out of the clouds of divine speculation into actual contact with *men*. And as to Antipas! It can only be the coincidence of his name with that of the most infamous of the *Herods* which has kept it out of that list of saints who *are* commemorated in the dedication of our churches. There may be historical doubt as to some accepted *martyrdoms*; the firmness and constancy of some celebrated sufferers for the Truth may be pious assumption only; but as for Antipas, the Lord Jesus Christ *has* spoken, and we are sure of him.

"Antipas, My faithful martyr who was slain among you!" Antipas, confessed before men by the mouth of the Son of God! ¹

This mention of a man by name suggests the further thought, Are our names uttered in Heaven? Does Christ, in His love and in His care, thus distinguish us?

It may be said, It is no matter. As God He is omniscient. He sees us every one, and can have regard to single souls amid the mass of humanity without such aids.

True; but there is something in the idea, if it be admissible, which seems to bring Him closer to us.

And Scripture seems to encourage it. We all remember the stress laid on names in the Bible. "He," says Bishop Hall, "Who brought all other living creatures unto man to see how he would call them, and would make use of Adam's appellations, reserved the naming of man to Himself." ²

¹ Some German critics have suggested that Antipas is a name merely symbolic, and represents not an actual man but an idea, namely that of one who for Christ's sake has dared to stand out 'against all,' a method which would effectually dispose of the historical existence of all persons whose names contain a meaning, and would include Jesus Christ Himself. This kind of criticism has been amusingly but fairly exposed in the well-known "Eclipse of Faith," pp. 296—301.

² Bp. Hall, "Select Thoughts," Works, vol. viii. p. 196.

Names of remarkable persons were given from Heaven before their birth, and change of name continually took place on man's being brought into special nearness to God, just as names are now given in Holy Baptism. Calling by name is spoken of as a sign of distinguished favour. Thus Moses pleads God's kindness shown in time past: "Thou hast said, I know thee by thy name, and thou hast also found grace in My sight." And God again says, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in My sight; and I know thee by name."¹ When He would comfort the Church by Isaiah He bids Jacob "fear not, for I have redeemed thee. I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine."² It was the privilege of Cyrus, the destined restorer of God's people, to be thus singled out years before his birth. "For Jacob My servant's sake, and Israel Mine elect, I have called thee by thy name. I have surnamed thee though thou hast not known Me."³

In the New Testament we read of "names written in the book of Life;" of "a few names in Sardis;" of "names to be blotted out of the book of Life;" of "names written in Heaven."⁴ And our Lord not only says, "I know My sheep and am known of Mine," but, speaking of Himself as the Shepherd, "The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name."⁵ There is in this language that which is of course figurative, but Divine persistence in a particular figure seems to indicate a reality beneath it.

The constant use by our Blessed Lord of the name of those whom He addresses will also occur to us; and this seems to be done mostly in the way of favour. It is not

¹ Exod. xxxiii. 12—23.

² Isa. xliii. 1.

³ Isa. xlv. 4.

⁴ Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 4, 5; St. Luke x. 20.

⁵ St. John x. 3.

His custom to employ it in the case of those who are hostile or in the main unsatisfactory. In His parable He speaks of Lazarus but leaves the rich man nameless. Judas, indeed, is once named, but it is in a last appeal to one chosen as a friend.¹ In other instances His utterance of names is even emphatic, as to St. Peter on several occasions, to Martha, Philip, Thomas ; to Simon the Pharisee, and to Zaccheus. Nor can we forget how when He first appeared on the resurrection morning it was the sound of His voice addressing her by her name "Mary," that awoke the Magdalene to the sense of His presence, and drew her to cast herself once more at His sacred feet.

May we not then believe that He calleth His own by name even now ?

"What a comfort is this," says Bishop Hall, "to a poor wretched man to think : Here I walk, obscure and contemptible upon earth, in a condition mean and despised of men ; but the Great God of Heaven is pleased to take such notice of me, as even from Heaven to call me by my name, and to single me out for grace and salvation ; and not only mention my name from above in the gracious offer of His ordinances, but to write it in the eternal register of Heaven. What care I to be inglorious, yea, causelessly infamous with men, while I am thus honoured by the King of Glory ?"²

What a commentary is this thought that our names are

¹ St. John is not directly addressed by name ; but the omission rather confirms the remark in the text than otherwise. Our Lord's speeches to him singly are recorded by himself, and it is the Evangelist's method throughout to shrink from coupling his own name with that of his Master. When he mentions the most gracious tokens of affection and friendship, he speaks of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," without telling us openly that such disciple was himself.

² Bp. Hall, "Select Thoughts," Works, vol. viii. p. 196.

thus recognised above on that fashion which connects a child's entrance into union with Christ, and its promised renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, with the pride of worldly station, or, worse, with the miserable affectation of it!

But greatest thought of all is that of the personal nearness to Christ which His calling us by name involves. Those of us who have felt the thrill of the first familiar utterance of our name by one with whom we are bound up in the bonds of a pure earthly love, will not fail to appreciate this feature of the condescension of our Saviour and our God.

XVI.

PRESENCE.

It is a great thing to see the Lord Jesus Christ carrying on His work of intercession at the right hand of God; it is inspiring and comforting to know that He still looks down with a tender interest on this little globe which He once trod, as it whirls on in space beneath His feet, and that He encourages us to ascend towards Himself in heart and mind, and to dwell with Him by faith in the Heaven He is preparing for us.

But there exists a greater mystery still. He Himself comes to us. It is not enough for His love to act in our behalf there, afar off, beyond the stars; He vouchsafes us His own Presence here.

The wish arises, as 'Presence' is here written, that we could employ some other word. We are so terribly familiar

with it that it has lost its solemn force for many of us. We see it bandied to and fro in controversy ; now explained away by an over-spiritualising process ; now ostentatiously thrust in the face of those who erroneously connect it with tenets which they abhor. And these are not the worst or the most deadening of the abuses to which it is subject. It is bad enough that party bias, party bitterness, party rashness, should gather round a deep and blessed idea. But what is it to see 'the Presence of Christ,' or 'the Real Presence'—words which stand for that which we should meditate upon on our knees, and never venture to approach in thought without an inward preparation of soul—conspicuous between the blazoning of man's worldliness and the perhaps filthy record of his crimes, in the columns of an ordinary newspaper !

And even in our more serious moments how complacently do we speak of it ! We say calmly that Christ's bodily departure was expedient for His members because, among other blessings, His limited local Presence was thus changed, by the power of the Spirit, into an universal one ; and that it is a greater advantage to have this universal spiritual Presence than it would be to know Christ as they knew Him who conversed with Him during His earthly life. This is the right thing to say, because it is perfectly true ; but do we feel its truth as we say it ?

Let us make real to ourselves some single scene of our Lord's intercourse with men.

We will not take one from His "going in and out" among the Holy Apostles. It may be objected that their intimacy with Him was in part official. They were chosen in a special manner to carry out an all-important work. Thus though we see St. Peter admitted to familiarity with

the Master Whom he follows with a jealous closeness, and St. John privileged to lay His head on Jesus' bosom, it may be felt that this affectionate relation, which certainly became personal, grew out of a more formal connection. Christ's love for these may appear to be the love of the Teacher for the disciple, or that of the Master for the servant, and to suggest His tenderness towards the Church, which they represented, more strongly than His union with individual souls.

But let us see Him in what was strictly His private life. With a certain brother and his sisters Jesus maintained a constant human friendship. "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." He used their house as a kind of second home; perhaps when He had no place where He might lay His head, He found with them a welcome rest and shelter. Even during the sad week of the Passion, when His hard day's work in Jerusalem was ended, Jesus, the eventide being come, betook Himself to Bethany.

Dare we imagine ourselves unseen bystanders on the occasion of one of these visits?

Lazarus is sitting in the house with that calm thoughtful look upon him which he has worn since he learnt the secret of the grave. Martha, eagerly expectant and fully awake now to the better part, has enough of the old instinct within her to glance round the room lest anything should be out of place when the hoped-for visitor arrives. Mary is feeding in silent meditation on the Master's last remembered words. Suddenly their ears catch the sound of a well-known footstep, and, behold, there stands at the door and knocks One for Whom they hasten to open. The gracious form enters. They know Him, perhaps, only in part as yet, as the Christ who is sent of God; but we, who

stand by, know that it is "God manifest in the flesh." Yes, here is He Who is very God, come to spend a quiet evening with that family as good men come now to spend one among their friends!

There is something grandly thrilling in the Old Testament account of the visit of the three angels to Abraham in the plains of Mamre.¹ There, to say the least, the Most High was so directly represented that "the Lord" speaks in the patriarch's tent. And that "Nay, but thou didst laugh," uttered in gentle and almost sad rebuke to Sarah, was as the voice of God Himself.

This always seems to be one of the most touching bits of the Old Testament. It speaks so movingly of God's love for His weak creatures; of the inability of the All-holy to pass over a case of unbelief or of untruthfulness; and yet of the merciful allowance of Him "Who considereth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust." But such appearance, whatever it was, is like a majestic vision. It is a passing, though true, manifestation of the Divine Presence. It involves no Incarnation of Godhead.

On the other hand, we see sitting in the house of Martha One who may be touched and handled and familiarly talked to and dearly loved; One who is really human and humanly real; and yet it is He "Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting!"²

And it is the right thing to declare, as we said, that we are privileged to a closer and more effectual companionship with Christ than that which He thus afforded!

Do we know what we are saying?

What would it be to us if we could see Him with our natural eyes as Martha and Mary saw Him? What if, as

¹ Genesis xviii.

² Micah v. 2.

we strolled some summer evening on an accustomed path, there were to join us in the dim twilight a mysterious person, and we found that it was He Who thus drew near and went with us ! Or what if, as we fell into musing over some page of the written Word, that vacant chair in our study were suddenly occupied and we knew that He Who looked on us so kindly and discoursed with us so graciously, "opening to us in the Scriptures the things concerning Himself," was none other than the Living Lord ! Could we ever forget the tones of that voice, or lose sight of the glance of that eye ? Would not our dearest friends marvel at the change which would come over us, and "take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus" ?

And to be told that our present advantage is greater than this would be !

We have most of us something to learn before we feel it. If personal intercourse with our Lord would be so great, what must that be which is greater ? The fact is that while the hope of a visible and tangible Presence is departed we lack the spiritual perception which should more than supply its place. It is much the same with us here as it is when our general personal religion has lost the assistance which the outward and material used to lend. We often hear people complaining that things are not as they used to be in old times. Perhaps they are speaking of Christmas-tides long ago. Apart from changes which years must be expected to bring, gaps in the family circle, and silence for voices whose music was sweetest of all, they say that somehow everything seems different. The very weather is changed ; the sun used to shine more brightly and the frosty air was crisper and more Christmas-like. The bells used to wake them in the morning with a cheerier sound. The

church looked gayer and more befitting holy festival. The services were heartier and more gladsome. There was more music in the carols of the children ; more life in the amusements of the season. The gatherings of friends were pleasanter ; and the poor at their Christmas fare wore a far happier look. Yet, in truth, God's sun shines now much as it shone then. In many respects a marked improvement has taken place where they bemoan a falling off. Churches and services and decorative taste and children's singing have certainly not deteriorated ; while, if there be less of the old feudal feeling, and less near sympathy between class and class, there is compensation in the decrease of abuses of sacred seasons, and in the more refined and Christian tone which our recreations assume. A child now in any well-ordered parish or household has really more to touch wholesome imagination and awaken religious feelings than we had in the Christmas of our youth.

But we do not feel it to be so. We shake our heads and sigh for the good old days.

Wherefore ? Because the cause of our disappointment lies within us. We have outlived the power of those accidents of Christmas to which memory reverts. The hearts of grown men and women do not, as a matter of fact, leap up within them at the sight of bright berries of holly, or rejoice at the sound of the frozen snow crackling beneath their feet. Perhaps it would be better for them if they did feel such things more, and if their days were more closely "linked each to each by natural piety." The very bells are now suggestive of mercenary ringers. Distribution of Christmas gifts opens our eyes to many a human weakness and selfishness. In our services and in our social gatherings alike, the soul's unrest and life's disturbing cares awaken

some touch of bitterness. The charm which outward things produce on the young imagination has lost its power, and the inward ability to lay hold on the sublime reality has not come to take its place. Something better 'in Christ' is within our reach, yet we sigh a sigh of regret for the lesser joy that is departed because we lack faith to make the true gladness our own.

In the same way we miss what seems the superior advantage of the first disciples in the visible Presence of the Saviour, because we fail to realise the truth of His greater promise.

To feel that it is greater (for how great would be the sight of Christ with the bodily eye!) we can only seek the help of His Spirit to bring home the revelation of it to our souls. Perhaps, too, we ought to face that revelation more honestly than we sometimes do. If we gave up foregone conclusions and threw ourselves more heartily into His teaching, we should surely be less unlikely to find Him Who promises to come to us.

Especially we ought to be on our guard against any unreal and non-natural interpretations of His words.

Christ tells His disciples that He will come again; and that He will be "with them always even unto the end of the world." Some say this refers merely to the coming of the Holy Spirit. As we have seen, Christ comes by the Spirit, but the Spirit does not come apart from the purpose of Christ or to supersede Christ. The Holy Ghost comes that Christ may come in His coming. He first prepares us to receive Christ; then He brings Christ to us.

Others say that Christ means He will come to us and be with us, as God; that is, as He is present everywhere. But this would be to tell us nothing at all, to mock us with a

seeming promise. As God, Christ cannot be said to come and go to a particular place and to particular persons, unless it be in the poetic language of the old prophets in which Jehovah is described as if He had bodily parts, eyes, hands, and feet; and as if He came from Teman and shone forth from Mount Paran.¹ Besides, it is manifestly the "I" Who speaks Whose return is promised. How did Christ go away? was it as God, or as man? "A little while," He says, "and ye shall not see Me." This was on His death. He went away as man. He died as man. If, then, He promised to come again He must mean that He would return as He went. As Jesus He spoke; as Jesus He must come back.

His strongest promise is connected with His abiding Humanity. He appears to His disciples saying, "All power is *given* unto me in Heaven and in earth. Go ye *therefore*, and make disciples of all nations. . . And lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."² His Presence, then, is based on power given unto Him. But power given to Him must be given to Him as man. As God it is all His own.

It has been replied that when He spoke these parting words He was so near to glory, and such a change was passing over Him, that we cannot regard the manhood which then spoke as the same with the manhood of His previous earthly life. This view is by no means admitted as tenable,³ yet, could it be justified, the answer would be that we have promises as precise and definite in the earlier and undisputed portions of our Lord's career.

At Capernaum, at the very time when He was preparing

¹ Habakkuk iii. 3; Deut. xxxiii. 2. ² St. Matt. xxviii. 18—20.

³ See Chapter IV.

the minds of His followers for His coming sufferings, and so pointing to His true human nature, He promised His presence with a few of them gathered for a special purpose in a particular place.¹ And it is during the last sad interview, when the shadow of death was upon Him, while He was allowing St. John's attitude of human endearment, that the assurances of His return abound, and the most gracious promises of intimate union are vouchsafed. No hint is given of a new Presence, or of a fresh mode of communication. His words imply a bodily absence, but they give assurance of the continuance of present relations. Christ refers to a past connection, and He pledges its abiding with a super-added power. The means are indeed to be different. The spiritual is to succeed to the fleshly; but that which the means convey is to be one and the same.²

If we open the New Testament, and read our Lord's words on this subject without any foregone conclusion, it seems almost impossible to misunderstand Him. He simply and plainly promises a continued nearness and union. There is nothing to suggest that His coming to us means a power given to us of going in thought to Him; nothing to support the notion that His positive statements depend for their fulfilment on the motions of our minds. It is strange that some of our brethren, who desire to maintain the closest adherence to the letter of Scripture, should on this, as on some other points, resort to interpretations which obviously depart from it.

It ought to be sufficient for us if we can arrive at an answer to the inquiry, Is this what Christ tells me? is it the truth of my Lord?—without asking further, How does this truth fit in with a certain scheme of doctrine? or, How far

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 20.

² St. John xiii.—xvii.

does it bring us into approximation to this or that school in the Church? Yet, as a matter of fact, the view of the God-man in Heaven is our safeguard against exaggerated notions in any direction. Gazing upon Him by faith, we gather at once the reality of His promise, and the principle of its fulfilment. We understand, seeing Him there, that the Presence He speaks of is not fleshly and carnal, and at the same time, since it is the Presence of Him Who is both God and man, that it is both spiritual and real. Against a mere carnal interpretation, the argument of the authors of the declaration added to our Communion Office is perfectly sound. Protesting against the idea of any corporal Presence of Christ's natural Flesh and Blood in the sacramental bread and wine, they urge as a reason that "the natural Body and Blood of our Saviour Christ are in Heaven and not here : it being against the truth of Christ's natural body to be at one time in more places than one." But on the other hand the supernatural Presence of Christ's Humanity equally follows. That Humanity is an essential part of Himself. The Godhead and manhood are joined in His Person never to be divided. The Presence of His Humanity is not in accordance with the ordinary conditions which belong to man's nature, but is brought about through that union which has taken place in His Person between manhood and Deity. It is spiritual and supernatural.

This, however, we shall have to regard more particularly when we come to meditate on the Sacraments as the direct channels of Christ's Presence.

A word only here on the difficulty which some of us experience in conceiving that what is spiritual and supernatural is at the same time real. "The mistake arises from the circumstance, that language is founded upon terms which

are supplied to us by our observation of the world of sense, so that the operations of mind can only be expressed by analogies and figures. But what is figurative is the expression, not the thing expressed. The word spirit is derived from 'spiro,' to 'breathe or blow,' in consequence of the analogy, pointed out by our Lord Himself, between the more subtile part of the material world, and that world which is immaterial. But because the word spirit is a metaphorical term, derived in the Latin and Greek languages from the action of the breath, we are not to infer that there is no such principle in man as an immaterial soul. The necessary deficiencies of language do not derogate from the certainty of those existences to which our consciousness witnesses, and which lead us up by the shortest track to the very throne of God. 'For God did not make our spirits and depart from them, but they are of Him, and in Him.' And unless spirit be something less real than body, spiritual presence is not less real than bodily presence. All that can be asserted of it is that it is of a different nature, and regulated by a different law. Bodies are present by contiguity of place, spirits by influence or power. When we speak, therefore, of our Lord's spiritual Presence, the word 'Presence' which we employ is a figurative term certainly, because it is borrowed from the world of matter; but it is not the less a reality that some peculiar influence or power of our Mediator, the God-man, is exerted through the intervention of His Deity in those places, times, and manners, to which His Presence is pledged in the kingdom of Grace."¹

But our failure to realise the blessing of Christ's Presence, and our inability to conceive of its superiority to a local and earthly Presence, arises more from our failure to grasp its

¹ Wilberforce, *On the Incarnation*, pp. 285-6.

purpose than from any difficulty on the ground of its spiritual character.

As we have already noticed, we are apt to confine our thoughts to one great and attractive portion of Christ's work. We make it as if He assumed our nature merely in order to offer in it that Sacrifice for sin in virtue of which forgiveness flows down to us, and we conclude that in appropriating, by an act of our own minds, the merits of that Sacrifice, we have derived the full benefit which His Incarnation was designed to bestow. But Scripture teaches us that not only was there a Redemption to be purchased, but a Regeneration to be effected; not only an external deliverance to be wrought, but union of man with God, through the incarnate Mediator, to be accomplished. The Cross is salvation, but its salvation is ultimately for those who are joined to God in Christ. It is sufficient for all men; its Grace covers all; by it Christ draws us all; but they only who become His by a true faith shall not perish but have everlasting life. "There is now no condemnation," for whom? "for them *that are in* Christ Jesus," that is, for them who are in living union with Him, a union, as St. Paul goes on to say, which influences their whole nature and affects their entire conduct. The coming of Christ in our flesh, His Life, His Death, His Presence as Man in Heaven, would be a disproportionately elaborate process were it intended only to furnish food for devout thought, and that almost exclusively with reference to one great incident of its course. And it would be a strangely arbitrary process were there no real connection between the manhood of Christ and our own, no continual outflowing of grace from His sacred Person for the healing of us all.

The Gospel method is illustrated by St. Paul's well-known analogy of the first and second Adam.

Mankind, we know, being contained in the loins of the first Adam when he transgressed and fell, inherited not only the curse of God's wrath against sin, but the poison and corruption of sin. We needed a Deliverer to save us from each of sin's consequences, the outward and the inward.

Such a Deliverer was promised in the Son of God Incarnate, very man, yet sinless.

Christ so occupied human nature (taking, in His miraculous conception, not the person of a single man, but manhood at large) that He could act for the entire human race. That which He should do would be moreover of infinite value because He was not Man only but also very God.

He thus offered to the Father in our behalf a sinless obedience; and He thus made the one all-prevailing Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction for the sins of the whole world. He reconciled us to God by His death.

But the second portion of His undertaking remains. He has, so far, cleared away the external obstruction which intervened between man and God. He has yet to bring us to God in virtue of that which He has accomplished, and in order that the blessings He has purchased may be made over to us individually.

This He does by uniting us to Himself, so that God may see us 'in' Him, regard us as a part of Him, and so regard that which His Son did and suffered as effectual for us who are now become His sons by adoption.

Thus Christ is declared to be "the second Adam." As we are born in union with the first Adam by nature, so must we be born again and preserved in union with the second Adam by grace. The evil which flows from the one must be corrected by the other. And in order to this our connection with the one must be as real as our connection with

the other. Adam, who sinned and became the fount of corruption, communicated His defiled human nature to mankind. Christ, Who is sinless, and is the Source of Life, must communicate His undefiled human nature to us to counteract the mischief. Nay He does more than counteract it. "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound."¹ Union with Him not only undoes the evil of the Fall; it raises us to the very life of God.²

It is to impart this gift (we are not now thinking of the means by which He is pleased to impart it) that Christ comes to us. His Presence is to give us this new nature, to

¹ Rom. v. 20.

² "Those are not to be heard who would suggest to us that man was higher and happier in his unfallen state than he can ever hope to be, and who perpetually lament as an incurable woe the ancient exile from Eden. It is true that the day when 'the man was driven out' was the birthday of affliction to the resolute enemies of God; to such it was the beginning of sorrows, the twilight of that darkness whose midnight is not even yet come. But to man, as a race, to the regenerate as individuals, that day of gloom was pregnant with glory. Had there been no fall there had been no redemption; had there been no redemption, humanity were the *creature* of God, but it could not have been the *contained* of God. Never could it have filled so wondrous a page in the story of the universe, never could it have thrilled the angels with the 'desire to look into' the marvels of the people of the dust. We might have been the children of a Divine Father (are the saints less so now?) but we never could have pointed to a Brother on the throne of Heaven! We never could have known a deeper interest in all the doings of the empire of God than a general approbation of the workings of holiness might bring. We could scarcely have ventured to assume an anxiety about the decrees of Heaven, confident and calmly confident in their wisdom, and perhaps judging it a presumptuous intrusion to attempt further inquiry: we could not have felt, as we do now, that we are inseparably linked with all that is loftiest in the universe, that there can be nothing effected or undertaken in which we are not personally interested, as effected or undertaken by Him Who in one Divine manifestation of His nature, has been pleased to bind us for ever to Himself."—ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons*, 2nd Series, p. 184

regenerate, to graft us into Himself; to make us so one with Him and He with us that He may present us before the Father, and cause us to be accepted in Himself the Beloved. Thus His merits become ours; His Sacrifice avails for us; His Blood is sprinkled on us; His Life is made over to us.

"I am come," He said, "that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly." "As the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given unto the Son to have life in Himself." "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." We are told that Christ liveth in His people; that they have put on Christ; of Christ being in them, being formed in them; that their union is so complete that they are dead with Christ; buried with Christ; risen with Christ; sitting already in heavenly places with Christ. "I in them," He says, "and they in Me." "Joined to the Lord;" "members of His Body and of His Flesh and of His Bones." Our bodies the members of Christ; He the Head, we the limbs; He the Vine, we the branches; "dwelling in Christ and Christ in us."¹

No wonder, now, that His Presence is described to us as better than the sight of Him with our bodily eyes! The one would powerfully affect our minds as an object from without, but the other supplies an inward and spiritual union, the true joining of man to his Saviour, and applies and makes over to us the most precious of spiritual gifts. "To all things," says Hooker, "He is life, and to men

¹ Cf. St. John x. 10, v. 26; 1 Cor. xv. 45; Gal. ii. 20, iii. 27; St. John xvii. 23; Gal. iv. 19; Rom. vi. 8; Col. ii. 12; Rom. vi. 4; Col. iii. 1; Ephes. ii. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 17; Ephes. v. 30; 1 Cor. vi. 15; St. John xv., vi. 56.

light as *the Son of God*; and to the Church both life and light eternal, by being made *the Son of Man* for us, and by being in us a Saviour, whether we respect Him as God or as Man. Adam is in us as an original cause of our nature, and of that corruption of nature which causeth death; Christ as the cause original of restoration to life. The person of Adam is not in us, but his nature, and the corruption of his nature derived unto all men by propagation; Christ, having Adam's nature as we have, but incorrupt, deriveth not nature but incorruption and that immediately from His own person into all that belong unto Him. As therefore we are really partakers of the body of sin and death received from Adam, so, except we be truly partakers of Christ, and as really possessed of His Spirit, all we speak of eternal life is but a dream."¹

"It is our faith" (to quote Bishop Hall) "that must raise our thoughts to a due estimation of our greatness, and must show us how highly we are descended, how royally we are allied, how gloriously estated. That only is it that must advance us to Heaven, and bring Heaven down to us: through the want of the exercise whereof it comes to pass that, to the great prejudice of our souls, we are ready to think of Christ as a stranger to us; as one aloof off in another world, apprehended only by fits in a kind of ineffectual speculation, without any lively feeling of our own interest in Him; whereas, we ought, by the powerful operation of this grace in our hearts, to find so heavenly an appropriation of Christ to our souls, as that every believer may truly say, 'I am one with Christ; Christ is one with me.'"²

¹ Eccl. Pol. Book V. lvi. 7.

² Bp. Hall, "Christ Mystical." Works, vol. vii. p. 226-7.

We have now to turn our eyes, then, to our living Lord in a new branch of His work. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock."¹ He wills to come to us in a way more effectual, more deeply fraught with blessing, involving a truer nearness, than that in which He came to the family at Bethany, or to the disciples in the upper room. His office in Heaven is not enough for His great love. His session, a Priest upon His Throne,² in ceaseless intercession, is supplemented by His coming down to earth to carry out His Divine purpose within us.

XVII.

PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH.

BEYOND all question union with Christ and participation in His Gift of Presence is connected in Scripture with membership in His Church. It is called His "Body," the very expression carrying with it a reference to His human nature. It is "the fulness of Him which filleth all in all,"³ that is, it is the complement of His purpose, the means by which He accomplishes His loving scheme for that salvation of man which depends entirely upon Himself. As members of it we are "members of His body, and of His flesh, and of His bones." "This is a great mystery," says St. Paul. He had been speaking of the mystery of marriage, in which, by God's original law, husband and wife become "one flesh;" and he goes on to say that marriage, thus ordained, has a deeper meaning in that it signifies that 'mystical union

¹ Rev. iii. 20.

² Zech. vi. 13.

³ Ephes. i. 23.

which exists between Christ and His Church.'¹ It is clear, then, that to the Church, whatever it may be, is attributed the possession of the full grace of Christ in its very highest sense.

The next point is, what is the Church to which such blessing is pledged?

By the Church, as was believed from the earliest times, is meant an aggregate of men who are in communion with Christ as members of the visible society established by the Apostles and everywhere known by that name.² It will scarcely be denied by any who consider the substance and scope of the Epistle to the Ephesians that, when St. Paul wrote to them, the words "concerning Christ and the Church" would be understood to refer to the Christian society in which they were enrolled.

But, in times comparatively recent, another notion has been put forward.

While the existence of a visible Church is of necessity admitted, and such Church is held to serve some useful secondary purposes, the word in its highest sense is declared to apply only to a kind of inner Church, an unseen number of God's true servants who answer to the grace of an

¹ Ephes. v. 28—33.

² The word which we translate Church (*ἐκκλησία*), and which originally signified a public assembly of citizens called out by authority, occurs more than a hundred and twenty times in the New Testament. In all but about six instances the sense of a visible society is absolutely necessary, and with none of them is such sense inconsistent. The passage which, at first thought, seems most remote from it is Heb. xii. 23. But here the Apostle is speaking of the present privileges of the visible Church and its communion with the whole body of God's saints; and he by no means implies that there exists a body of God's saints which is not, or was not while its members were on earth, in outward communion with the visible Church.

inward calling. They may be members of any outward organisation, or of no organisation whatever. Together they make up an ideal company, recognisable by God alone, and connected with each other only by spiritual and unseen bonds. To such, the promises of grace and presence are held exclusively to belong.¹

On the other hand, while it is allowed that only the faithful ultimately receive benefit from their nearness to Christ, it is urged that it is not to any such ideal company, but to the actual society of Christians on earth He pledges His own Presence, and that it is as members of this society we are united to Him.

Before considering the direct bearing of Scripture on the point, it may be well to see how far that view of Christ's office in Heaven which we have been endeavouring to gather appears to affect it. Things which seem mysterious and hard as we gaze upon them from human standpoints,

¹ This notion has gathered strength from the loose and incautious language which is employed respecting the invisible Church. It is often spoken of as if it were another and a distinct Church from the visible. The Catholic Church, it is true, is from one point of view invisible; while it is visible in the world, it is invisible beyond the veil. The Church of the apostolic age, or of any past generation, is invisible to us now, though we know that it exists in its faithful members in the paradise of God; for 'all live unto Him.' We may speak, too, of its being invisible to us, in the sense of its being unseen by us, which of the visible Church are its true and consistent members, which are living branches of the Vine, and which are dead and withered.

But where, it is asked, does Scripture teach us more than that the visible Church has thus its invisible side? Where have we authority for imagining the existence of two Churches, one visible, the other invisible, each with its own members? Where is there a trace of an invisible band of God's accepted *ones apart from the visible Church, or where the record of a single saint* who was not in his lifetime a member of that Church? (Cf. J. H. Newman, Sermons, vol. iii. serm. xvi.)

may be found clothed with a clear and loving meaning when we regard them in the light which falls from His Throne.

The difficulty which suggests the idea of a second and higher use of the word Church arises from two principal sources. First, from an inability to understand how the visible Church can be so highly spoken of when it notoriously contains evil men as well as good. To this it may be replied that when our Lord is speaking of it by its very highest titles of "the Kingdom of Heaven," and "the Kingdom of God," He distinctly contemplates the presence of tares among the wheat, goats among the sheep, bad fishes among the good; and He tells us that the separation between these shall not take place until the Day of Judgment comes.¹ Again, He tells us of those who have once been really grafted into Himself, and made actual branches of the True Vine, but who, *abiding* not in Him, and He in them, are cast forth as a branch and withered.² And we read of those who are "the temple of God," and in whom "the Spirit of God dwells," as being liable, by defiling the temple of God, to His anger and destruction, since they have profaned that which was made holy unto Him.³

It is agreed on all sides that the wicked will not ultimately benefit by their membership in Christ; but these passages clearly show that the existence of the wicked within it, and of those who do not take hold of the blessings offered to them, is no real argument against the fact that membership and blessing are made over to men in the Church.

The chief difficulty, however, of many worthy persons, lies in an unwillingness to conceive that communication

¹ St. Matt. xiii. 25—29, xxv. 32, xiii. 47, 48. ² St. John xv. 6.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

with God and Christ can be conveyed through human instrumentalities. Christianity, they say, is a spiritual religion, and to represent the visible Church as, in any way, the channel of grace, is to deprive Christianity of its spiritual character.

It may be asked, in all seriousness, what is meant by a spiritual religion?

"God is a Spirit," says our Saviour, "and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."¹ This is the text which is usually quoted as the authority for the 'spiritual' view. We accept it with all reverence and in all thankfulness. It tells us that the religion which Christ came to introduce, unlike the Jewish system which was chiefly ceremonial, and which the traditions of men had overlaid with minute and disfiguring observances, should be based upon higher and spiritual principles; that while it unfolded clearer views of the nature of God, it would require a spirituality of heart and soul as distinguished from formalism, and an intelligent, true, heart-felt devotion, as distinguished from a perfunctory discharge of religious duty. But it does not mean, Christ cannot mean, to tell us that Christianity was to be so exclusively spiritual as to be unmixed with, and independent of, things external to ourselves; that worship was to be henceforth the worship of inward adoration only, each man "flying to the solitary Deity in the solitude of his own spirit." The effect of this would be to exclude Christ Himself from His own work. If He be still the one Mediator between God and man, in virtue of His true Humanity, Christianity is not exclusively spiritual.

If He be still "the Way," and His own word abides faithful, man has not direct spiritual access to God. We

¹ St. John iv. 24.

must "enter into the Holiest by the Blood of Jesus ; by a new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His Flesh."¹

Thus, as has been insisted upon by great divines, the theory of the ultra-spiritualist may be shown to conduct to most serious error. It makes no difference if Christ be nominally retained as an object of worship, and His Mediation professed as the ground of our hope, if we practically pass Him by. If we lose sight of His Humanity, which is indeed a very part of Himself, and simply approach the second Person of the Trinity under the name of Christ, we are losing sight of the true ground of our acceptance, and are lapsing into a virtual Deism.²

No ! from such interpretation of Christ's words as would cut us off from everything human and outward, we would appeal to Christ Himself, and point to that weary Body which is sitting, even as He speaks, by Jacob's well ; craving a drink of water at the hand of the woman of Samaria.

Had the Word of the Father elected to regenerate and restore mankind by a simple utterance spoken out of His original glory ; or had God the Son sent God the Holy Ghost to do all by a purifying and exalting power, without any humiliation of Godhead, any stooping to man's nature, then a purely spiritual mode of carrying out what would be a purely spiritual work, might be expected. But when we see the "Word made Flesh" dwelling a man amongst men, employing human methods throughout a human life, dealing with and acting upon men as Man, (though Man divinely powerful,) having regard to their bodies as well as their souls ; when the love of God in His only-begotten Son, is thus expressed in an Incarnate Saviour, and we find that

¹ Heb. x. 20.

² Cf. Wilberforce, Incarnation.

Saviour during His stay on earth exercising to the full the results of His Incarnation, and still Incarnate ascending into Heaven ; then we see consistency in those statements of Scripture which speak of Him as still directing and superintending operations which, expressing as they do His continuous manhood, involve human agencies, and affect not only a part of man's nature, but the whole ; and we have no difficulty in believing that the purposes of Divine Grace are still supernaturally effected by Him through outward modes of action. The visible Church is the natural consequence, so to speak, of the Incarnation itself.

Or, again, I am asked to suppose that instead of making general provision in His Church for His personal feeding of men's souls, and His personal healing of their corrupted natures, Christ's care is confined to an elect few, chosen out for a foreknown response to grace ; and that these few represent His purpose in the world, and monopolise that love which is described as poured upon the Church, and as prompting Him to give Himself for it.

I may be wrong, but I cannot believe this when I look back to the history of His gracious ministry. I see crowds of afflicted wretches following Him and thronging round Him. I see Him, Whom, (if we may not speak of outward form and comeliness, or attractiveness of manly beauty in His Person,) we may at least imagine to exhibit the true grace of a perfect and refined manhood, in contact with disease and deformity of the most loathsome kinds. Perhaps a curse has fallen upon Syria for its sin in its rejection of Him, and the sick multitudes which then gathered out of all the cities and villages were not as horrible in their fever, ophthalmia, and cretinism, as those which are now found there. Still there were the

maladies even more dreadful in that 'possession' which He so continually encountered. And to know how the good Lord sighed over and cared for these—how He touched them with a loving hand, and did not shrink from the presence of all their misery—and then to be told that He went back to Heaven a changed Saviour; that, though He remembers Peter and James and John and Martha and the Marys, yet, in His last legacy of love, He included no direct provision for the human crowds with whose wretchedness He had so markedly sympathised! Surely He will carry out the acted parables of His life as well as the spoken parables of His mouth. His Church will not be the hidden privilege of a favoured few, but the open refuge of the many. It will be an all-embracing system of grace, in which the power of His healing word and of His healing touch shall be supernaturally continued, and in which shall be numbered also the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind, gathered in by His appointed servants from the streets and lanes, the highways and hedges of the world. Let there be no slackness in any of us about securing the wedding garment; but let us not deny that the dinner is even now prepared, the oxen and fatlings killed, and all things made ready for the feeding of hungry souls, or say that none are bidden to the wedding but they who shall fully answer to the Divine call.

Rather would I believe that He still has compassion on the multitude, and that the scene in the wilderness foreshadows His comprehensive purpose. As He causes the men to sit down on the green grass, *parterre* by *parterre*,¹ I am reminded of the one multitude broken up into groups in the world which is His field, and as He blesses the

¹ St. Mark vi. 40. *Πρασιαλ πρασιαλ*.

miraculous bread and gives it to the disciples to distribute, I see that provision of bread of which there is ever enough and to spare, which He now gives, by the hands of His servants, for the food and sustenance of souls. And, so far from any exclusive graciousness, He still seems to say, even in behalf of those who may approach Him with mixed motives, that the means of refreshment and the opportunity of a truer discipleship are not to be hastily withheld; "They need not depart: give ye them to eat."

It may be said this is mere inference, and such indeed it is. It will only have weight with those who hold that the acts of our Lord's life generally had a future significance.

That which we are told, however, of our Lord's present life bears upon the subject in a way which can scarcely be thought fanciful.

His present Humanity seems to require that His Church, as contemplated by Himself, should be an outward and visible society. As is the Head so must the members be. If Christ be a Being not purely spiritual, but it is declared necessary to His headship over the Church that He be still very man,¹ surely the Church itself, as it exists in the world, cannot be merely ideal and unseen. "The disciple is not above his Master, nor the servant above his Lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord."²

If Christ were to come down visibly to earth as He now is, we know that it would be in His natural body. Is it, then, unreasonable to conclude that His members here are recognised by Him in the body also? Suppose Him thus suddenly to appear amongst us, would He acknowledge

¹ Ephes. i. 20—23; Heb. ii. 7—18.

² St. Matt. x. 24.

no outward societies of men as such, but, corporeal Himself, have respect only to the hidden feelings of single hearts? Would congregations, "where two or three are gathered together in His name," or where crowds are met for worship, be passed by Him without notice, and Himself only be revealed to the inner consciousness of individuals here and there? Can we picture Him standing alone in the streets of Jerusalem, or retracing the scenes of His former existence at Nazareth or Bethany, unwelcomed and unknown, gazed upon as a stranger by an ignorant population, recognised by and recognising no outward following, receiving no public homage, attended by no declared servants, conscious only of being the object of a hidden love of true Christians scattered here and there among various peoples? It is strange that they who look most intently forward to the visible return of Christ to earth, and to His glory in a visible kingdom, should be the same who generally refuse to contemplate our present connection with Him beyond its purely spiritual aspects. Surely as the Church would be were He now to come openly amongst us, such must it be in His sight, as He cares for and blesses it from on high. He would come to cleanse and purify, to winnow and to sift. The tares would then be distinguished from the wheat; but the field would be the same mixed field on which through all these ages He has been bestowing His care.

Or consider not merely what He is, but what we are.

Is it consistent that Christ's present view of His Church should embrace only the immaterial part of men, when the whole man is to dwell with Him in Heaven? Can He be having regard now only to one part of His composite

creature when the whole creature is to live in His eternal Presence?

The ultra-spiritualist seems to lay too little stress on the doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body, and on those passages which speak of this life as a more direct preparation for the life to come; a preparation which comprehends the regeneration of the whole of our nature. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹

And once more; the spiritualistic view cannot be carried out consistently as to the communication of the grace of the Gospel. Its most advanced maintainers must come to the admission of man's absolute dependence on human instrumentality. As St. Paul puts it when he says, "Who-soever shall call upon the Name of the Lord shall be saved," entrance into covenant mercies cannot be attained, according to God's general method, in spiritual isolation. "For how shall they call on Him in Whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"² We forbear from pressing here the Apostle's climax which connects God's method of salvation with a direct commission given to men.

Even if the grace of Christ consisted solely in knowledge to be imparted, and not also in a real gift to be communicated, which intensifies the argument, yet thus 'spiritualism' must succumb. It looks entirely to the unseen work of the Holy Ghost. But has the Holy Ghost, since the Apostles' times, ever communicated the knowledge of Christ to man apart from the ministration of His fellows? Was any child of our sinful

¹ 1 Thess. v. 23.

² Rom. x. 14.

race ever born possessed of an acquaintance with the Christian scheme, or divinely furnished, previous to all instruction, in the full mystery of the faith? Did ever missionary find in some far-off island a mortal cut off from all intercourse with his more enlightened brethren, who was looking to Him to Whom the ends of the earth are invited to come? The Spirit is indeed free as the wind that "bloweth where it listeth," but has it ever been the Spirit's will that the faintest odour of the Name of Jesus should be borne to far-off shores, save by those breezes which have moved the hearts of faithful men to approach them, or independently even of those literal and natural breezes which have filled the sails of the ships that conveyed the messengers of God?

Where, then, is the difficulty in accepting the fact that God is pleased to work under the same kind of limitation throughout? If He has ordained that the assumption of human nature by His Son should be the first step, and the abiding means of man's salvation; and if human agency be indispensable at the outset for the first communication of Christ's grace to any individual, is it reasonable to question His pleasure that that grace should continue to flow through appointed human channels? What consistency is there in endeavouring to escape from Gospel teaching which connects the higher stages of union with Christ with earthly conditions, when, confessedly, without some such intermediate agency, there can be no approach to Christ whatever?

But let us turn to our Lord's actual method. He lays the foundation of His future kingdom by forming an outward society. He begins by gathering round Him a little band of followers. He gradually instructs them and pre-

pare them for a more extensive work. He gives them a formal commission, and assigns to them outward duties. He speaks of their future position in the world as visible and even prominent. They are to form a "city set on a hill," which cannot be hid. In His solemn Intercession for them with the Father, He prays for their visible and outward unity which is to be an evidence recognisable by the world around them. He speaks of His Church thus constituted, as an authority to be heard, as possessed of awful powers in His Name, and as that against which the gates of hell shall not prevail. And it is to it, in its making disciples of all nations, in its administration of that Sacrament which is the entrance into visible communion with Himself, as well as in its general teaching derived from Him, that He pledges that Presence which is the life of the Church understood in its highest and most mysterious sense. It is to this necessarily outward community that He declares, "Lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world."¹

And it is historically certain that it was by inward grace received in outward union with this original band of men that men were brought into Christ. It was in the visible fellowship of the Apostles, in actual communication with them, in common partaking of outward ordinances and the offering of common prayer, that that which is called the Church gathered and grew. It was to this community that "the Lord added daily (so that the hundred and twenty grew into the three thousand, and the three thousand into ever-increasing multitudes) such as should be saved."²

¹ Compare St. Matt. v. 14, 16; St. John xvii. 21; St. Matt. xviii. 17, 18, xvi. 18, xxviii. 19, 20.

² Acts ii. 41—47.

And we must not overlook the fact of the continuity of this new Society with the Church of the old dispensation. The Christian Church stands on no independent basis. The old branches were indeed broken off and we are grafted in, but the common root lies deep in the eternal purpose of God. Under His earlier system a visible Church was the direct medium of His communication and channel of His grace to men. Christ came to remodel, enlarge, enlighten, and purify God's Church, but His mission was not to destroy but to fulfil. Prophecy clearly marks that the Church of future ages was still to be a visible institution, and that it was to be a development and improvement of that which already existed. Its members are not referred to as individual receivers of God's grace, but in their collective character. It is spoken of under personal images as "the King's daughter" of the Psalms, and the Bride of Solomon's Song; as an object of magnitude, as a Mountain; or as a single object capable of containing many, as the Lord's House, the Tabernacle of David, the Temple, the Holy City. The increase and extension of the elder Church is not to be by union with a new institution, but by gathering to a centre already existing, or by expansion from such a centre. We are told, "All nations shall flow unto it."¹ The Church is bidden, "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of their habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes. For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles."²

And the Church, thus enlarged, is to be no secret company, but is to stand forth a visible power among the

¹ Isa. ii. 2.

² Isa. liv. 2, 3.

kingdoms of the world. It is the stone seen by Nebuchadnezzar in his dream, which, cut out without hands, became a mountain and filled the whole earth, smiting the iron, and the clay, and the brass, and the silver, and the gold, till the wind carried them away like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors. This stone, the Kingdom of the God of Heaven, has already survived the four mightiest empires of the world, and it bids fair to prove itself a "kingdom which shall never be destroyed, but which shall stand for ever."¹

But Christ not only thus founded His visible Church, but conferred on it powers which prove it to be the very Church of His close and active sympathy.

The true Church of which union with Christ is the exclusive privilege cannot be an ideal and spiritual company enjoying an inward and secret oneness with Him, if there be place in it for the outward and authoritative acts of men. Yet Christ commits the keys of His Church to human hands, calling them the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and He assigns to it, as His representative, a binding and loosing power which shall be ratified above.² This promise, which was first made in the person of St. Peter, He confirms to the officers of the Church. An offending brother, remaining obstinate in his offence, is to be reported to the Church: "but if he neglect to hear the Church let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."³ Again, after His Resurrection, He breathed on His disciples and

¹ Daniel ii. 31—45.

² St. Matt. xvi. 19.

³ St. Matt. xviii. 16—18.

bade them receive the Holy Ghost for the office He was committing to them.¹ "As the Father sent Me," He says, "even so send I you," thus delegating to them an authority which He Himself had received as Man. And what is this authority? He had previously claimed it Himself. When the Jews accused Him of blaspheming He showed them that, as the Son of Man, He had power on earth to forgive sins. This power He now transfers to the men who were to be His representatives and agents. "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them: and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained."

We cannot here enter on the difficult subject which these solemn words of Christ suggest. Our concern now is not with the nature of the powers committed to the Apostles, or with the question of the degree in which those powers have been transmitted, but with the fact of their bestowal. If a man's admission or exclusion from the Kingdom of Heaven, and the remission or retention of His sins in God's sight, can now in any way be affected, or could at any past time be affected, by powers given by Christ to men, that man's relation to Christ cannot be exclusively spiritual. If excommunication from, and restoration into, the visible Church be so distinctly recognised and acted upon above, men are *not* regarded by God apart from all reference to this earthly society: and this earthly society is evidently that Church on union with which, as the means of union with God through Christ, man's acceptance, according to covenanted mercy, depends.

On the bearing of the Sacraments on the visibility of the Church according to the very highest conception of it, we will not here dwell, reserving the consideration of these

¹ St. John xx. 21—23.

means of grace for separate meditation. If they are in any sense instrumental media of union with Christ, and, by His appointment, necessary to that union, the question is at once settled.

A few words, however, on the exhortations of the New Testament to Christian unity. If we understand these exhortations literally they are of themselves decisive on the question of the visible or invisible Church as the seat of Christ's Presence. But some maintain that inward unity and spiritual communion alone is intended, and reduce the idea of the oneness of the Holy Catholic Church, the one Catholic and Apostolic Church as planned by Christ and carried out by His Apostles, to a religious sentiment of accord existing among fellow believers.

It might be asked, what is meant by inward unity, and how can men be inwardly and spiritually in union with other men of whose outward existence they are unconscious? Unity of heart and feeling must be based on outward knowledge and acquaintance. We can speak of inward communion and sympathy with absent friends, and feel conscious of a mysterious link which binds us to departed ones.

But this is based on previous knowledge of them in the body. Or if we feel a relation to persons we have never seen, or who lived in days long gone by, this is not without hearing or reading of them and so making them real to ourselves, as they were in actual life. God's Spirit never supplies a consciousness of communion with persons of whom we never heard. He supplies it in proportion as we know about them, and the particulars of that knowledge are things which are dependent on their bodily existence. Thus the Church, among whose locally divided members

unity is urged, must have in the first place an outward and visible existence.¹

But turn to the passages most relied upon by the upholders of the purely spiritual theory. These are chiefly found in the Epistle to the Ephesians, in which the Church of Christ is described in highest and most mystical terms. It is His Body : the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.² By it the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, is to be made known unto principalities and powers in heavenly places.³ Christ loved this Church and gave Himself for it—"that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."⁴ He nourisheth and cherisheth it. The intimacy of His union with it is a great mystery symbolised by the closest of all unions, that of husband and wife, who are "one flesh."⁵

The privileges of its members are described in language almost ecstatic. The blessings of God's people in this holy brotherhood are matter of His eternal predestination : they involve adoption by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise and glory of God's grace, wherein He hath made us "accepted in the Beloved."⁶ "In Whom we have redemption through His Blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."⁷ They include the spiritual quickening of them who were dead in trespasses and sins, with their resurrection to a new and better life in Him ; nay, their

¹ Cf. "The Ministry of the Body," by R. Wilson Evans, Vicar of Heversham, ch. xii.

² Ephes. i. 23.

³ Ibid. iii. 10.

⁴ Ibid. v. 27.

⁵ Ibid. v. 31.

⁶ Ibid. i. 6.

⁷ Ibid. i. 7.

very Ascension with Him into Heaven.¹ Access by the Spirit unto the Father ;² fellow-citizenship with the saints and household of God ; to be built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone ; in Whom the Church, as a complete building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord ; to be made a habitation of God through the Spirit.³ Could language more strongly express the completeness of the Church's mysterious incorporation into Christ and the blessedness of which, as His members, they who are born into the Church are partakers ?

And of what Church is the Apostle speaking ? ' Surely,' the Spiritualist exclaims, ' it must be solely of the inner and invisible Church of elect souls ; of those who are united to Christ, not by membership in any outward society, but by the power of a living faith.'

It is true that St. Paul is, throughout, contemplating Christians as realising the grace of their calling : but the Church in which he describes them as possessing all these blessings is marked as an actual and not an ideal communion.

It is a body over which Christ, as Man, exercises a direct Headship, which is the complement of His purpose in the world ;⁴ a household and a holy temple which has succeeded to the commonwealth of Israel ;⁵ which may display God's Glory, by the exhibition of its graces, throughout all time ; which must preserve an outward unity, not being one in the Spirit only, but one body ;⁶ which has its appointed offices and administrations ;⁷ a definite system of doctrine ;⁸ an

¹ Ephes. ii. 1.

² Ibid. ii. 18.

³ Ibid. ii. 22.

⁴ Ibid. i. 22, 23.

⁵ Ibid. ii. 19.

⁶ Ibid. iv. 4.

⁷ Ibid. iv. 11.

⁸ Ibid. iv. 14.

organisation under Christ its Head:¹ whose success and increase depend, under Him, on the mutual discharge of assigned functions by its members;² and whose internal vitality is to make itself manifest by outward growth.³

Further, membership in the Church of which St. Paul is speaking, while it entails a change of heart and life in individuals, lays upon them duties towards and in common with the brethren with whom they are associated, regulates their intercourse on the ground of common brotherhood in Christ, and carries down the mystery of common union with Him, as a constraining principle, into the affairs of every-day life. The whole Epistle thus identifies the seat of highest Christian privileges with the outward and visible Church.⁴

To revert to a single illustration.

He beseeches the Ephesians to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, and which he has so grandly described, with spiritual affections corresponding to the spirit of the Gospel; "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace;" and for this reason—"There is one *body*," he says, "and one *Spirit*, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."⁵ Does he mean by body and Spirit one and the same thing? Who can doubt that he thus refers both to outward and to inward union? He is pressing inward and spiritual unity, graces of humility and patience and affectionate consideration towards our brethren in Christ. And he grounds it on that complete union in which Christ has bound them. First, there is to be outward union as

¹ Ephes. iv. 15.

² Ibid. iv. 16.

³ Ibid. ii. 21.

⁴ See Ephes. ch. iv. 20, and ch. v.

⁵ Ephes. iv. 1-6.

members of the same body, or outward corporation ; secondly, there is to be inward union as those who are animated by the same holy principle. It is to be a thorough union, as loving one Lord Jesus Christ, clinging to one scheme of doctrine, admitted into holy fellowship by one outward sacrament ; serving one great God, the common Father.

And instances of such teaching might be multiplied. Let, however, one from another Epistle here suffice. St. Paul has been speaking of Christ's Headship, and he goes on to say : " Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church : whereof I am made a minister." ¹

Now, whatever his precise meaning when he speaks of his sufferings filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ, it is evident that the Church which is here spoken of as His body, is that Church which is most closely identified with Christ. The nearest and tenderest connection between it and Him is inferred, such as the Lord Himself signified when He declared to Saul that persecution of His members was persecution of Himself. Is this, then, the invisible Church of which we are told ? Does the text belong only to the elect whom man's eye cannot distinguish, but who are dear to the secret heart of the Lord ?

No ! St. Paul says of this body, which is the Church, "*whereof I am made a minister.*" No man can be made a minister of an invisible community, the active servant of an idea. No one could be appointed to minister to a hidden number of individuals scattered here and there and discernible only by God Himself.

¹ Col. i. 24, 25.

The matter we are considering is so important, and opinions on its various phases are so widely divergent, that it seemed desirable to enter into it somewhat fully. Yet surely differences would at least be softened, and language which at best has a controversial sound would be rendered unnecessary, if we could but agree to refer to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Has He not reappeared since His Ascension to assure us that the visible Church and its particular branches are the appointed seat of His grace and the continual object of His care? Not only did He condescend to identify Himself with a little company of His suffering followers in the city of Damascus,¹ but He raises the veil before St. John in Patmos, to declare Himself the Patron of the failing Churches of Proconsular Asia.²

Outward orders and organisations cannot be indifferent features of the Divine scheme, nor can the Saviour's dearest care be reserved for the faith of an unseen few, when the stars which are "the angels of the seven Churches" are in the right hand of Christ, and the seven golden candlesticks of Ephesus and her sister communities stand on the floor of Heaven.

XVIII.

PRESENCE BY THE SACRAMENTS.

OUR next step is to consider how the Lord Jesus Christ vouchsafes us union with Himself, in the Church, by the Sacraments.

¹ Acts ix. 4, 5.

² Rev. i. 20.

It is strange, when once we have by faith seen Him thus carrying out the purpose of His Incarnation, to feel that we are here approaching a subject which many, who desire to be His consistent followers, regard with a positive distaste ; and in speaking of which the most guarded and cautious language is necessary, lest some, in company with whom we desire to walk with Him, should be offended.

Guarded and cautious our language should indeed be for the blessed dignity of the subject and the mystery of its grace ; but that believers should be suspicious where they ought to be adoringly thankful, and disposed to turn back where they should be devoutly eager to follow, is surprising.

Yet so it is. Distinct views of the Sacraments are unpopular with a large proportion of the members of the English Church, and these often of the better sort. It is easy to understand the existence of vulgar prejudice among the ignorant, and of a defective, if not altogether erroneous, view of Gospel Truth among those who have chosen out for themselves new paths. We can understand, too, how conscious inconsistency of life causes many to shrink from any real approach to the Saviour ; and how such persons are tempted to ignore a baptismal grace which they have misused, and to decry a means of access which they do not care to face.

But the distaste which is to be found among earnest and, in their way, really religious people within the Church, especially with reference to the second Sacrament, is a different thing. They may be regular in their monthly attendance at it ; they may approach it with a sincere devotion according to their view of it, and may derive from it all the comfort for which they are accustomed to

look ; but they do not mentally assign it its due place in the Christian system, and almost resent the assertion of its place by others.

Doubtless this arises in part from a natural reaction from the excesses of the Church of Rome. Partly, too, it may be attributed to defective teaching among ourselves. That the Sacraments did not occupy their proper position in the first great religious revival of the present century, some of its best supporters have allowed. There is ever a tendency in movements which aim at the assertion of some great idea to assume a one-sided character. They seem to be raised by God in His good providence to bring a neglected portion of His doctrine vividly before men, but no gift of infallibility is bestowed on the human agents, while their zeal exposes them to a danger from which colder natures are free. They are so occupied with their special conviction that they are apt to be blind to those balancing statements of Scripture which would ensure the maintenance of the proportion of faith. Thus, in the case of the party which so successfully contended for the inward and spiritual character of Christianity against a lifeless formalism, there ensued a practical slighting of outward institutions.

But there is another cause of the distaste in question, which lies still deeper, and with which men of all schools are chargeable. The Holy Communion is too often insisted upon as a positive duty, while its place in Christ's spiritual kingdom is not shown. Of course, in one sense, the ordinary arguments ought to be sufficient. We ought to be willing, nay anxious, to come to the Holy Sacrament as a mere matter of obedience to our Lord. We ought to be drawn to it by common gratitude. We ought to hunger for the spiritual graces which the lowest view attaches to its

faithful reception. We ought to take Christ at His word when He tells us, in such solemn terms, of its paramount necessity.

But these things fail to move us as they should do through the absence of one connecting link. "What indisposes the minds of many to the doctrine of sacramental grace is that it seems so completely a matter of arbitrary appointment. They require to discern greater congruity between the effect attained and the means of attaining it. We are used to see cause and effect linked together by a chain of interdependent circumstances; and the gap between a slight external act and a momentous internal alteration is intolerable to our fancy. Say what men will, the judgment revolts at it; man's faith is not strong enough for such a trial. This is why all the learned works which have been written on the Sacraments fail to give confidence in their efficacy: the unbelief, which is vanquished in the study, reappears in the world, and men acquiesce in the formularies of the Church, but their reason remains unsatisfied. What they need, as Hooker expresses it after St. Augustine, is some answer, such as not only may press them with the bare authority of custom, but also instruct them in the cause thereof."¹ It seems that some such reason may be found in the revelation of the present work of Christ. The occurrence of two positive ordinances in a dispensation which in the main substitutes principles for rules, and spiritual affections for ceremonial observances, in itself arrests our attention, and leads us to conclude that some great mystery lies beneath them. And the way in which our Saviour treats these ordinances more than confirms the impression.

He makes a marked exception to His usual method of teaching in favour of Baptism and His Holy Supper, freely

¹ Wilberforce on the Incarnation, pp. 412, 413.

departing from that reserve which He is ordinarily pleased to maintain.

We rightly regard the doctrine of the Atonement, which is the grand result of the Incarnation, as the centre of the Christian system ; yet, as has often been observed, and not unfrequently with an unfriendly intention, Christ's references to it are comparatively meagre. It appears to be His aim to fix firmly the faith of His followers in His Person, and, having done this, to leave the just deductions from His acts and sufferings to be made by His appointed teachers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus He calls attention to the occurrences on which Christian doctrine was to be based. He predicts the outward circumstances of His Passion and Death ; He tells how He shall be betrayed and mocked and scourged and crucified and slain ; and how on the third day He shall rise again.¹ But He puts forth no theological scheme. He does not fit His death to any theory of Sacrifice, or formally connect Calvary and the Easter Morning with man's Redemption and Justification before God. Yet to the two Sacraments He draws careful attention, speaking of them with a fulness which contrasts strongly with His usual reticence.

Indeed the light which He does throw on the Atonement is vouchsafed incidentally in utterances which relate to the Sacraments. It is in the conversation with Nicodemus about Baptism that the power of the Cross is first asserted.² It is in the discourse at Capernaum that He speaks of giving His flesh over to death for the life of the world.³ And it is at the Last Supper, in the very words of institution, that the sacrificial and propitiatory character of His

¹ St. Luke xviii. 31—33.

² St. John iii. 14, 15.

³ St. John vi. 51.

Body broken and His Blood shed upon the Cross is revealed.

This certainly indicates that the Sacraments were to possess a peculiar character. It is not that they are of more importance than the Incarnation whose effects they were to extend, or than the Atonement which they were to commemorate, and the graces of which they were, by Christ's own gift, to apply. It is not that they are more imperative than faith which is a previous condition (in those capable of it) of their beneficial reception. But it is, we believe, because, while doctrines might be, as in fact they were, subsequently unfolded by the inner action of the Holy Spirit upon His servants, and faith might be developed by the same invisible influence, the Sacraments must have "a preliminary basis external to ourselves," a something which Christ alone could fix and settle. He Himself ordains them because they are to be the instrumental means of communicating something which He alone can bestow; something for the use of which faith and spiritual affections are required, but which no amount of faith and spiritual affection could create. The effect of doctrines is on the minds of those who are made acquainted with them. The effect of Sacraments depends on the action of the Saviour Himself. In the one case it is by an internal influence, in the other by an external gift. The one is the result of grace, light, knowledge proceeding by the Spirit, from our union with Christ; the other is the mean by which that union is at first effected, and by which it is continually maintained.

This impression is confirmed by the absoluteness with which the use of the Sacraments is enforced by Christ. Baptism is a very condition of approach to Him. No

amount of faith, no thoroughness of conversion, no fire of loving discipleship could be accepted in lieu of it. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Not "he that believeth" only, but "he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." When the Apostles are charged to go and make disciples of all nations, it is, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."¹

The necessity of the Holy Communion is laid down by Him with no less positiveness. It might be inferred indeed from the very words "This do in remembrance of Me," in connection with such sayings as "If ye love Me keep My commandments;" "Why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"—but He also declared, while giving the promise of eternal life to such as should really feed on Him in this Sacrament, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you."

¹ The general consent of Christendom on this point is well known. From the day when the people who were pricked in their hearts said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and received for an answer, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you," and "they that gladly received his word were baptized," down to the present time, in which Baptism is the condition of Christian membership and its lack a bar to Christian burial, the mind of Christ has been stamped on the conscience of His Church. Certain modern teachers, it is true, relying on faith as an inward motion of the mind, disparage the Sacraments, frequently resting on the account of the conversion of the jailer at Philippi. His heart's cry, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and the reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," are held to teach 'a present salvation' the result of even sudden conviction, irrespective of any outward agencies or means of grace whatever. The asserters of such notion omit to notice, however, that the jailer and his household were at once, and as a matter of course, baptized (Acts xvi. 25—33). It was *after* this that "he rejoiced, believing in God." It will be remembered, too, how in St. Paul's case a miraculous call by Christ Himself did not render unnecessary this sacramental access.

It is so unlike our Blessed Lord to bind His followers to positive ordinances, that the fact of such compulsion prepares us beforehand to see in them some vital connection with His saving work. The reason must lie deep in that plan of salvation which He came to work out and which He lives to apply.

Have we not the clue to the mystery in that faith which connects the Sacraments with our access to, and our life in, Christ the God-man and only Mediator? If Baptism were a mere sign of admission into His service, and the Lord's Supper but an acted profession of reliance on His Sacrifice, or mere symbolical representation of His death by which we manifest or seek to quicken our faith, then His language concerning them would be altogether unaccountable. But if He, Who became Man for us and is still Man, acts thus upon us who are men, and is pleased to employ outward means for the producing of such a result as our mystical union with Himself, then the process is clear though the mode of operation is mysterious. And this, if so it be, accords with the general method of the Incarnation. Salvation by Christ is a spiritual process, but it is not wholly spiritual. He, Who Himself has taken our nature and a human body, thus joins us to Himself in ordinances which affect our bodies. He, Who saves us by outward act as well as by inward grace, wills that we come to Him in outward act as well as in spiritual devotion. So, in the one instance, He takes a natural element and causes its due use to be accompanied by spiritual power; in the other, He makes natural food and drink, whereby our bodies are strengthened and refreshed, the vehicle of the mysterious action upon us of His own life-giving Manhood.

Let us see how far such idea is warranted by Holy Scripture.

With regard to Baptism there is little question among us now. If there still be differences as to its effects within us, almost all agree that by this Sacrament we are brought into a new connection with Christ; and that in it each individual child of the first Adam by nature is brought into relation with the second Adam by grace. We need not multiply proofs. It is enough that St. Paul tells us—"As many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."¹ "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body;"² that is, we are made members of a body of which Christ is the Head. "We are buried with Him by Baptism into death" . . . "Wherein also ye are risen with Him."³ Hence the baptized are said to become "the Body of Christ; and members in particular."⁴ "Their bodies are members of Christ."⁵ Hooker's definition is accepted by most moderate men of varying schools of thought. He says: "Baptism is a Sacrament which God hath instituted in His Church, to the end that they which receive the same might thereby be incorporated into Christ, and so through His most precious merit obtain as well that saving grace of imputation which taketh away all former guiltiness, as also that infused Divine virtue of the Holy Ghost which giveth to the powers of the soul their first disposition towards future newness of life."⁶

But more is required. Life in Christ begun must be continued and renewed by Him. "If our bodies did not daily waste, food to restore them were a thing superfluous. And it may be that the grace of Baptism would serve to eternal life, were it not that the state of our spiritual being is daily

¹ Gal. iii. 27.² 1 Cor. xii. 13.³ Col. ii. 12.⁴ 1 Cor. xii. 27.⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 15.⁶ Eccl. Polity, Bk. V. ch. lx. 3.

so much hindered and impaired after Baptism. In that life, therefore, where neither body nor soul can decay, our souls shall as little require this Sacrament as our bodies corporal nourishment, but as long as the days of our warfare last, during the time that we are both subject to diminution and capable of augmentation in grace, the words of our Lord and Saviour Christ will remain forcible, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."¹

Of the effects of the Eucharist we have partly spoken already. It has two sides, or rather it may be viewed under two aspects: first as it is the Church's solemn act of worship and pleading of the sacrifice of Christ;² and secondly as it

¹ Eccl. Polity, Bk. V. lxvii. 1.

² To such as hesitate to refer St. John vi. 50—59 to the Holy Communion, (as Hooker, following the consent of Primitive Christianity, unhesitatingly refers it in the passage above quoted,) the following striking thoughts are submitted. They occur in one of Three Sermons on the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, by William (Cleaver) Lord Bishop of Chester, 1801, and are quoted by Wilberforce in his work on the Eucharist. He is pointing out the singular coincidence in manner and arrangement which runs through St. John iii. and St. John vi.

"Our Saviour had told Nicodemus that he must be born again. Nicodemus replies to the impossibility of the thing in the obvious and literal sense of the words. Jesus in answer, with peculiar solemnity and claim to attention, points out the possibility and the means of being born again, as well as the necessity of such regeneration. 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.' To which, still remarking upon the want of apprehension in Nicodemus, He adds, 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?'"

"In the sixth chapter, Jesus had said, 'The bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.' The Jews again answering, as Nicodemus had before done, to the impossibility of the thing in its literal sense, said, 'How can this man give us His flesh to

is the means of our union with Christ. It is with the latter of these we are now concerned. In the one we present before God the appointed memorial of that Body broken and Blood shed for us which His sacred Presence hallows and sanctifies ; and we believe that, as we thus plead His one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, we set in motion, as it were, the august ritual of Heaven, and obtain the blessings which His Death purchased, through the power of His all-prevailing Intercession.

But this is not all. There is not only the act of worship, eat ?' To which our Lord returns an answer corresponding to that given to Nicodemus, even to the very turn of the sentence ; ' Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you : ' the purport of which words is repeated and confirmed in the three next verses, to which He adds, still remarking upon their want of apprehension, ' Doth this offend you ? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before ! ' A reply so exactly parallel to that with which He had concluded His conversation with this Master in Israel, that the bare juxtaposition of these sentences will render each the comment upon the other. From which analogy I cannot but think that whoever will observe the style, manner, and connection of these two discourses, will be of opinion that St. John took pains industriously to show that the two institutions, which were to distinguish this religion, made part of our Saviour's plan, long before they were actually enjoined."

The common objection, on the score that Baptism and the Lord's Supper were not yet instituted, falls to the ground at once when we consider our Lord's usual method of teaching. (See Chap. III. of these "Thoughts"). Again, a comparison of St. John vi. 50—59 with the words of institution on the Paschal evening seems to leave no room for doubt as to the reference. Those words would indeed have been incomprehensible without such previous intimation. As for ancient authority, it is all on the side of Hooker's interpretation : and our own Church distinctly applies our Lord's words, verse 56, to the Holy Communion—"Then we spiritually eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood ; then we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us." (Exhortation in Communion Service.)

but there is the Sacrament. If with a true penitent heart and lively faith we receive it, then it is said that "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us : we are one with Christ, and Christ with us."

We are not attempting a treatise on this Communion, but only seeking to see how far we are justified in regarding it as Christ's appointed instrumental means of joining us to Himself. We need not enter, therefore, upon the debated question of the point of time at which the Sacramental Presence of Christ occurs in it. Believers in the real spiritual Presence anterior to reception, and holders of what is known as the receptionist theory, are agreed on the main point, if so be that they recognise His Presence as something real, something external to themselves, something which Christ comes to give, and, giving, not merely raises devotion and quickens faith, but makes them partakers of Himself.

This faith is based on our conviction that in Christ resides the source of all blessing to man : that He took upon Him our Humanity of flesh and blood, in order that, repairing the effects of the Fall, and making Atonement for our sins by His precious Death, He might join us to God : that all good, all grace, all possibility of rising from a lower life to a higher, flows into us through Christ Incarnate.

How He is pleased to effect this communication is a point to be settled only by His own Divine words ; but an Apostle whose teaching was, as we have seen,¹ so directly derived from the Lord Jesus Himself as to amount to an additional revelation of His will, has given us an illustration of His principle of action which we must needs seriously consider. It is that of the first and second Adam, insisted

¹ See p. 114.

upon by St. Paul : " As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . The first Adam was made a living soul ; the last Adam was made a quickening (that is a life-imparting) spirit."¹ The great principle of Christianity is, that as Humanity sinned and fell in Adam, so it is redeemed and regenerated in Christ.²

Now our connection with Adam is a real connection. Original sin consists not in " the following (or imitation) of Adam, but is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man that naturally is begenerated of the offspring of Adam."³ From Adam we derive a defiled human nature.

Christ came to reconcile us to God by His Death, and to impart to us, as the second Adam, of His undefiled human nature, that nature being holy and spotless through its union with the Godhead.

We should expect, then, that our connection with Christ must be as real as our connection with Adam, and that the communication of His nature must be as real as the natural communication of Adam's nature. We are separated from God, not by thinking of Adam, or remembering him, or copying him, but by being organically connected with him. We must be joined, then, to God in Christ (we may conceive) by a means equally real.

¹ 1 Cor. xv.

² Mr. Keble remarks on the correspondence, in which the Church has always believed, between " the second Adam " and our Lord's own description of Himself as " the Son of Man." " ' I, the Son of Man : ' such is the title which from the first He had taken to Himself in preference to all others : signifying thereby to thoughtful hearts that He was the very seed of the woman, the second Adam promised to undo what the first had done. And each successive application of the title, whether in the way of power or of endurance, may be seen to bring out more and more fully this gracious remedial office." (Euch. Ador. p. 37.)

³ Ninth Article.

Such a real connection is impossible in the way of nature, but that which is impossible in the way of nature may be possible in the way of grace.¹

Again : our souls, we are told, are each a separate creation of God, and become in some way infected with an hereditary taint which is perpetuated through the propagation of our bodies. If then we find in the Kingdom of Grace that the sanctified Body of Christ is represented as the supernatural medium of benefit to the souls of men, there is an evident consistency in the idea, a resemblance between the poison and the antidote. "If the flesh of the first man, made poisonous and mortal, communicates death to the soul, shall not the Flesh of Christ, which is healthful and life-giving, bestow upon it life and safety ? Therefore, as the soul contracts all its ill by flesh, it ought by flesh to receive all its benefit. If it is to be freed from the evil, which came to it by the flesh of the first man, it must have society and union with the Flesh of Christ, the Second Man. And as by the single flesh of the first man all souls are infected and destroyed, so (may we not expect) all souls (to be) washed, cleansed, and quickened by the Flesh of Christ ? As the flesh of the first man is the storehouse of all vices, sins, and crimes, so all virtues, all spiritual treasures, and all blessings may surely be stored up in the Flesh of Christ. As the former flesh separates the soul from God, and unites it with Satan ; so the Flesh of Christ may separate it from Satan and unite it to God. For as Satan lurks in the flesh of the first man, so the Godhead abides in the Flesh of the Second. Therefore, when the soul is united and associated with the Flesh of Christ, it is associated and united with the Godhead. And as Satan takes possession of souls by

¹ Cf. "The Second Adam and the New Birth," by Rev. M. F. Sadler.

the flesh of Adam, so by His own Flesh are they taken possession of by Christ." ¹

It can scarcely be necessary to say with reference to such thoughts as the above, as well as with reference to the words of our Blessed Lord Himself, that the work in question is one which depends not on any material agency but on spiritual power. "It is the spirit that quickeneth," He added after His discourse at Capernaum ; "the flesh profiteth nothing : the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." ² If by the spirit our Lord here means the Holy Spirit, He teaches us that the bare participation of ordinances, unless the Spirit of God work with them and quicken the soul by them, profits nothing. Of course He cannot intend to contradict all He had been saying before, which was about the life-giving power of His Flesh. The Flesh of the Incarnate Son, which He gives for the life of the world, cannot be profitless. It is simply that a fleshly interpretation of His words—which are spirit, and which refer to a mystical participation of His Body and Blood (which mystical participation giveth life)—would destroy the very nature of His Sacrament.

But probably the true interpretation of this text (and it amounts to the same thing), is, as follows. By spirit is meant our Lord's Divine Nature as opposed to His human nature. He explains to His wondering hearers that those

¹ Raimundus de Sabunde (quoted by R. J. Wilberforce, "Doctrine of the Eucharist," pp. 355, 356). Raimundus, a Spanish divine (A.D. 1434) would probably understand the Presence of the Flesh of Christ in the Eucharist in a different sense from that which we attach to it. But, allowing for the difference, his thoughts are sound. The point is not how our Blessed Lord acts upon us by His Flesh, whether by transubstantiation or by spiritual power ; but the fact that He does so act really and truly, whatever the mode.

² St. John vi. 63.

miraculous effects which were to attend the reception of His Flesh and Blood would not arise from their natural influence, but from that supernatural efficacy with which they were endowed by means of their personal oneness with His Godhead. "The word Spirit in our Lord," says Bishop Bull, "is uniformly employed in Holy Scripture and in the writers of the first age to express that Divine nature in Himself to which it properly pertained to give life to mortals." So that the truth here revealed is that our Lord's Manhood was to be the principle of life by reason of that Godhead with which it was united. This may serve to explain His allusion in the preceding verse. "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where He was before?" The exaltation of His glorified Body into Heaven is to be a sign of the new qualities with which it is to be invested. "If you suppose," He seems to say, "that My Flesh cannot give you life, how can it ascend like a winged thing into Heaven? For if it is not able to give you life because it has no natural tendency to do so, how can it tread upon the air and ascend into Heaven? For this is equally impossible to flesh. But if it ascends, contrary to the law of nature, what is to hinder it from giving life, though it has no tendency to it by its own nature? For He who has made *that* heavenly which belongs to the earth, can enable it also to give life though by its own nature it tends to corruption."¹

In speaking, then, of the virtue of His Flesh and Blood our Lord does not intend a carnal and material virtue, but that His Flesh and Blood act, after a heavenly and spiritual manner, by the power of His Godhead.² That He declares them so to act we all know.

¹ St. Cyril on St. John (quoted by Wilberforce).

² We have already noticed (Ch. III.) how our Blessed Lord is pleased

As they were eating at the last Paschal Supper Jesus said of the Bread which He blessed and brake, "This is My Body," and of the Cup, "This is My blood." And St. Paul says, "The Bread which we break, is it not the communion (*i.e.* the communication or imparting) of the Body of Christ? The Cup which we bless, is it not the communion (*i.e.* the communication or imparting) of the Blood of Christ?"

But our Lord had previously marked that His Flesh and His Blood, thus to be eaten and drunk, were for the communication of the graces of His Humanity and for the union of His disciples with Himself.¹

He had declared Himself to be the true Bread which came down from Heaven—that is, that He became that Bread by His Incarnation and Manhood. Thus He gives "life unto the world." As He says elsewhere, "As the Father hath life in Himself so hath He given unto the Son to have life in Himself . . . because He is the Son of Man." He adds that the relation between man and God, on which depends man's happiness, was only to be maintained through Himself as Mediator; and that into man's nature the Godhead had poured its gifts, and thus had constituted Him the real food and sustenance of men's souls. Presently He explains that they who eat of Him as such food shall do so by eating His Flesh and drinking His

to connect the bestowal of blessings with His Body. "As to the angels our Lord's humiliation in the flesh was a mystery which they had to learn by degrees, so to His disciples and friends on earth was the exaltation of that flesh; and they were trained by their experience of the virtue which went out of it in the way of corporal and physical miracles to believe in and adore its wonder-working presence when it should be made known to them as the very food and medicine of their souls."—KEBLE, *Euch. Ador.* p. 37.

Cf. St. John, chap. vi.

Blood; "for My Flesh is meat indeed, and My Blood is drink indeed."

And the result is: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me and I in him."

"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me."

These last words are very strong. They tell us nothing less than this: "As His Godhead flows into Him by necessary derivation from His eternal Father, so does He communicate His Manhood by merciful gift to His earthly brethren. Thus there are three stages in this great work. The Godhead imparts itself to the co-equal Son. This is His eternal generation. The Son unites Himself to man's nature. This is His Incarnation. He communicates His Manhood to His brethren. This is His real Presence in the Holy Eucharist. As the first, then, is the communication of that substance which is common to the Three Persons in the Blessed Godhead, so is the last the substantial communication of that Manhood which has been hallowed by the taking it into God."¹

How complete and true is this union of the faithful with Christ is proved by its results. St. Paul tells us that we are so incorporated with Him that we are thus brought into a new relation with our fellow men. "We being many are one Bread and one Body; *for* we are all partakers of that one Bread."²

The key, then, to the grand importance of the reception of the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, is to be found, after all, in one of those truths in which, as Hooker (who was what would be now called 'a receptionist') declares, all truly Catholic Christians agree, namely, "that

¹ Cf. Wilberforce on Eucharist.

² 1 Cor. x. 17.

this Sacrament is a true and real participation of Christ, Who thereby imparteth Himself, even His whole entire Person, as a mystical Head unto every soul that receiveth Him, and that every such receiver doth thereby incorporate or unite himself unto Christ as a mystical member of Him, yea of them also whom He acknowledgeth to be His own."

It is repeated that we are not attempting a treatise on the Sacraments at large, and it must not be supposed that other aspects of their gracious influence are forgotten because they are not dwelt upon; such, for instance, with regard to the Holy Communion, as those which Hooker goes on to specify in the passage from which the above words are extracted; "that to whom the Person of Christ is thus communicated, to them He giveth by the same Sacrament His Holy Spirit to sanctify them, as it sanctifieth Him Who is their Head; that what merit, force, or virtue soever, there is in His sacrificed Body and Blood, we freely, fully, and wholly have it by this Sacrament; that the effect thereof in us, is a real transmutation of our souls and bodies from sin to righteousness, from death and corruption to immortality and life; that because the Sacrament, being of itself but a corruptible and earthly creature, must needs be thought an unlikely instrument to work so admirable effects in man, we are therefore to rest ourselves altogether upon the strength of His glorious power, Who is able and will bring to pass that the Bread and Cup which He giveth us shall be truly the thing He promiseth."¹ But we are now only considering how we are to connect the grace of this Sacrament with the immediate work and action, and with the direct and continued gift, of the living energising Lord and Saviour, and how we are to see the ground of its necessity, and the

¹ Hooker, Bk. V. lxvii. 7.

pledge of its blessing, in its character of His instrumental means of union with Himself.

Need we add that we are assuming throughout the absolute necessity of a faithful and devout approach? The fact that the grace of the Sacrament is Christ's own gift, and not anything to which we can help ourselves, or which man can give us of his own will and pleasure, would alone necessitate this condition. As, after birth, life is needed for the assimilation of natural food, so after entrance into spiritual life in Holy Baptism, continuance of that life by repentance and faith, and a true coming to Him for the blessing sought, is ever indispensable.

They who were near to Him, and even touched Him in the press, drew no virtue out of Him. The benefit was reserved for the touch of humble faith. His own rule still holds here as elsewhere, "According to your faith be it unto you."

The same faith in a Divine Giver is a sufficient safeguard against any supposed danger of putting the Sacraments in the place of Christ. There is a conceivable way of approaching the Holy Communion which might render any who practised it justly liable to this charge. If they hold that, after employment in certain preliminary exercises, more or less sincerely and devoutly gone through, they could come, and by kneeling in a certain place, and first receiving and then eating and drinking certain outward elements at the hands of certain men, could become partakers of highest spiritual benefit, not, indeed, irrespective of their own seriousness of mind, yet without the Presence of Him Who is the Source of all grace, then not the Sacrament, but attendance at an ordinance miscalled sacramental, would be substituted for the saving action of Jesus.

But if we believe Him to be spiritually but really there, we cannot put His Sacrament in His place, for He is in His Sacrament.

The fallacy in the objection of some such amiable and well-meaning persons lies in the meaning which they have unconsciously come to attach to that word "Christ." It expresses to them not a Divine Person, but a doctrinal idea. To preach Christ, with them is to preach salvation by a mental reference to Christ, which they call faith. In this sense we may seem to put the Sacraments in His place when we say that salvation depends not merely on the state of our own minds and feelings, but on our real and actual state in relation to Him in Whom alone is acceptance, which state is affected by our sacramental approach. But the affection of our minds to Christ is not Christ. A devout affection is indeed an indispensable condition of our union with Him. But the affection will not effect the union. *Christ must give it*; and to rest on the affection, without coming for His gift, is virtually to put ourselves, that is the state of our own hearts, minds, feelings, in the place of the Saviour. It is to substitute ideas of our own for His merciful gift, and like the Rationalists, whose doctrines we affect to regard with dread, to set up our natural notion that connection with God must be merely the intercourse of mind with mind, against the supernatural system of Mediation through God's Incarnate Son, which is revealed to us in His Word.

But the best answer to any suggested difficulty is—Jesus has spoken. The best safeguard against any possible perversions of His teaching, is to see Him at the right hand of God carrying on day by day, by Intercession and by Presence, His mediatorial work in our behalf; and ever to

bear in mind that all grace comes directly from Him, whatever be the appointed channels; that all we receive is an emanation by His Spirit from Himself. Ordinances however solemn, a ministry however "able in the New Covenant," our highest aspirations however devout, our best services however sincere, are in themselves nothing. Their use is so far as they are the instrumental means or conditions of the action of that Glorified Son of Man, Who, having reconciled us to God by His Death, is "saving us by His life."

It is the fact that Sacraments are ordained for this purpose by Christ in order not only to give us that which we understand by the word grace, but to unite us to Himself, which constitutes the wide difference which exists between them and other ordinances. It is this, too, which justifies our Church in asserting that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are generally necessary to salvation with a directness which she only ventures to use in one other instance, namely, when she speaks, in accordance with her Lord's own words, respecting that true faith in Him without which no beneficial access to Him can be enjoyed.

We have already glanced at the dignity of Public Worship as it corresponds to the Worship of Heaven, and as it is taken up, as it were, by Christ Himself and presented before the Throne. But besides this recognition, there is a promise to it of a special Presence. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." This, as the words themselves imply, and as the context demonstrates, refers to the public assemblies of the Church. It will be remembered that the celebration of the Holy Communion was the distinct object of such assemblies in Apostolic and early times; but apart from

this we may believe that united Prayer, as the expression of the corporate life of the Church, and as the result of that union with each other which flows from union with Christ, draws down His special favour. We may believe that, as we offer the united sacrifice of Prayer and Praise, He is really among us though our eyes be holden that we see Him not ; among us as truly as if we saw a cloud of glory fill the house in which we gather together, and in it Jesus revealed to our fleshly sight.

But this is a different kind of Presence from that in the Sacraments. It is a Presence of Him who comes to hear and adopt our prayers, and to bear them upwards with acceptance. What we there ask, in unison of heart and voice,¹ He is present to see performed ; He, as the Mediator, will carry our requests into the ear of the Father. But the Sacramental Presence is not only that He may plead in our behalf and procure for us external grace, but that He may so come to join us to Himself that God may see us and accept us "in Him."

And there is another difference. The Presence of Christ in worship is the result of our union with Christ. It is because we are His that He comes among us. The privilege is bestowed on those who are gathered together in His Name. But we must first be baptized into that Name. They who meet for fellowship of acceptable Prayer must be made one among themselves by incorporation into their Lord. "Other means of grace result from our union with Christ. Sacraments conduct to it."

And this, again, separates by a broad line Baptism and the Lord's Supper from those ordinances to which the name of Sacraments has been widely applied of late. The word

¹ St. Matt. xviii. 19. *Ἐάν δύο ἢ μᾶλλον συμφωνήσωσιν.*

itself is used in different senses by different writers, and the employment of it would be matter of comparative indifference if it were always made clear that a lower sense only is intended when it is applied otherwise than to our Lord's own institutions. Indeed this lower sense is recognised by the Church of England herself in some of her authorised documents.¹ If it be only meant when Confirmation, for example, is called a Sacrament, that it is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, such a term is perfectly justifiable.

But surely it is better to keep to the general usage of our own Church than to employ, however innocently, terms which may be grievously misunderstood. Popular depreciation of other means of grace, while it may render us anxious for their better recognition, ought not to tempt us to risk a lowering of the grand means of Christ by their possible confusion in the minds of our brethren with any other holy rites, however beneficial. We believe that as the Bishop's hands are laid on the head of each faithful candidate for Confirmation, the grace of the Holy Spirit accompanies the outward sign. We believe that in ordination the Holy Ghost is conferred in the laying on of the same hands "for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God."² We believe that God's blessing rests on each wedded pair who seek to be made one in holy love, not in the unblest union of a legal form, but before Him in the sacred rite which symbolises the very

¹ "Therefore neither it (Orders) nor any other Sacrament else, be such Sacraments as Baptism and the Communion are. But in a general acceptation the name of a Sacrament may be attributed to anything whereby an holy thing is signified."—*Book of Homilies* (On Common Prayer and Sacraments).

² Ordering of Priests.

love of Christ. Of the other so-called Sacraments we need not speak. The one, through its perversion by others, is in abeyance among ourselves ; in the other, as used by the Romish Communion, we can see little agreement with that Apostolic and primitive practice from which it takes its rise.

But what are these rites, regarded from the highest point of view, compared with Baptism and the Eucharist ? Give them their full due. See in Confirmation a blessed opportunity and season of grace ; in Orders a needful gift ; in Matrimony a consecration of body and soul under the very hand of God. Believe, if you will, that when Christ, the true Samaritan, before He departed gave to the Apostolic Body the two Sacraments, He promised that whatsoever it should spend more He would recognise and repay ; and that He thus recognises and accredits ordinances which, under the Spirit's guidance, that Body has bequeathed to us. But do not class such as these with the very acts of Christ. Use them, honour them, profit by them ; yet do not confound the loving care of Him Who had compassion on us as we lay suffering from the assault of Satan, and, humbling Himself to exalt us, would fain raise our prostrate nature by pouring His own oil and wine into our wounds, with any after-provision made for our benefit. Such are means of blessing and of grace, but in His own peculiar gifts our good Lord gives us of Himself.

XIX.

THE BODY OF CHRIST.

THE view of our Blessed Lord's work, which Faith thus affords us, may tend to fix our notions on points which present difficulty to some earnest minds.

One of these is the true nature of the Christian ministry.

It is historically certain that the Church grew round the chosen company of the Apostles who had been directly commissioned by Christ Himself, and that it continued after their death the same visible society, officered by men appointed to their posts by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. For fifteen hundred years, no man conceived that he could be admitted into membership with his Lord, save at the hands of these appointed ministers, and no man presumed to take upon himself the office of ministering without that outward commission which was handed down in regular succession from the Apostles, and through them from Christ. Any attempted invasion of the sacred office would have been scouted by the entire Christian community; so deeply was the mind of the Lord, on this matter, impressed by the Spirit on the conscience of the Church. We believe also that it is historically certain that the orders of men, thus solemnly fixed, were those of Bishop, Priest, and Deacon. But even could a Presbyterian succession be proved, the position would be the same. The point is, that a direct commission through those who had themselves received authority to ordain, was ever held to be absolutely necessary for the performance of sacred functions.

This principle, as we know, our own Church plainly asserts, defining the authority in question to be that which has descended through Episcopal consecration.¹

But while most English Church people recognise these facts, some doubt as to the necessity which created them. While admitting that we have a duly authorised ministry, they attach little importance to the circumstance, regarding it as a thing which may conduce to the well-being of the Church, but which does not affect its character as a true branch of the Church universal. They may profess that our own is the most excellent and prudent way, but they cannot see why the irregular ministrations of the sects should not be regarded as equally valid with those of our own clergy. Questions as to the priesthood, or ministry, are spoken of as questions of external discipline ; differences with regard to them are known as differences concerning 'ecclesiastical government.' They are not supposed to touch the essence of the Church.

It seems strange that the uniform existence of an absolute rule for so many centuries, a rule traceable to Apostolic times, should not strike such persons as being in itself conclusive. Surely it could not have been arbitrarily introduced. They who had the mind of Christ, and were filled with His Spirit, would scarcely encumber His rising society with purposeless enactments, or, coming fresh, as they did, from converse with Him during the forty days in which He spoke to them of the things pertaining to His kingdom, lay down regulations for its management in the wantonness of a selfish authority. There must surely be a deep reason for

¹ See Preface to the Ordinal. Cf. Article XXIII. But the practice of the Church is the best exposition of her theory. No man can officiate, as a priest or deacon, who has not been episcopally ordained.

the introduction of a provision so positive in a Religion so spiritual as that of Jesus.

And such reason our faith in His mediatorial system supplies. Our brethren fail to see the need of a ministry commissioned by Him, because they do not realise the directness of His present action.

If the object of such ministry be merely to spread abroad the knowledge of Christianity (an important part of its work, it is admitted, but not the whole) ; if the Church be merely a convenient organisation for impressing men with Gospel truth, with perhaps the further aim of supplying facilities for the decent performance of united worship, then the appointment of its officers (supposing certain language of St. Paul's could be got over¹) might be expected to be a matter of minor importance, and to proceed on different principles according as the convenience or edification of the body of believers might seem, under differing circumstances, most likely to be promoted. Conspicuous ability and acknowledged personal fitness, acquaintance with God's Word, and spirituality of character, might thus seem to supply all necessary qualifications ; and ministers might be appointed, under arrangements made by particular Churches, to act with such authority as a club, or any human corporation, can impart to its officials.

But if it be our Lord's method to bestow a gift from Himself through human instruments ; nay, if that gift be nothing less than His own indwelling Presence ; if, as we have seen He does, He vouchsafes to impart Himself to His people and to join them to His own Person by a grace which flows through ordinances administered by human hands ; then His direct appointment of those hands follows as

¹ Rom. x. 15.

a matter of course. Any faithful subject may endeavour, in a becoming way, to stimulate the loyalty of his fellows ; but no one can enrol them in the sovereign's service but he who holds the sovereign's commission ; no one can distribute the substantial marks of the royal favour but he to whom they have been actually consigned.

Inward and personal fitness is indeed required of those who minister in holy offices ; but no amount of inward fitness can enable a man to act in the name of Christ, or empower him to give, as Christ's agent, that which is in reality Christ's gift.

Let it not be thought that such a view tends to the undue exaltation of men. It is sometimes said that to maintain a high view of the ministerial commission is to put the Church in the place of Christ, just as it has been said that the Sacraments tend to supplant Him. But the theory which derives the commission from the will of the Church or congregation far more nearly approaches such substitution. For this implies, if there is any grace whatever to be expected, that the society was made once for all its reservoir, and that it can authorise individuals at will to dispense of such grace to its members. But, according to the truly Catholic view, Christ Himself is ever the giver. The stream flows indeed through human conduits, but the source is Himself, and on immediate connection with Him, nay on His own immediate will, the supply absolutely depends. There is no temptation, then, to attribute anything to man. His learning, eloquence, zeal, or other gifts have nothing to do with his main usefulness, valuable as they may be for secondary purposes. The error of the multitude which ran together in Solomon's Porch has little chance of being repeated here ; for none will look too earnestly on man, as if by his own

power or holiness he had effected a miracle of grace, when the Lord Jesus Christ is recognised as conveying His treasure in the earthen vessel. The excellency of the power is thus of God and not of us.

As there was no inherent virtue in Christ's material garment, and yet virtue passed through it at the touch of faith, so is it now. The Church, like her prototype the seamless robe of her Lord, becomes the instrument of communicating that which is not her own but His.

Again, faith in Christ's present action tends to regulate our conceptions of the Church's true position in His system. The policy of Rome has prejudiced many against the idea of a Church possessed of a vigorous corporate life. Rome's system is based on a principle against which our national instinct revolts even when religious perception is not clear enough to detect, or religious feeling deep enough to resent, its essential wrongfulness. It has employed Christianity as a means of obtaining temporal power and temporal importance for a religious corporation ; not, let us hope, for the gratification of personal ambitions, but in all sincerity as a supposed fulfilment of the mind and will of Christ.

While the Eastern Church, regarding our Lord chiefly as the Wisdom of God and Revealer of Divine Truth, makes prominent His prophetic office and represents His work as the work of spiritual enlightenment, its Western rival contemplates Him mainly in His kingly character, and believing itself, in the person of its sovereign Pontiff, to be the viceroy and representative of an absent Lord, aims in that Lord's name at universal spiritual empire. Thus it has been led to strive after governance even in the temporal affairs of the world, believing that to reduce the world into the Roman obedience would be to bring the world's every thought into

the true obedience of Christ. To this end the power of the Priesthood has been made to subserve, and around this idea, as might be shown, Rome's peculiar doctrines have successively gathered. The general effect of this has been to throw Christ further and further back from immediate concern with, and direct action in behalf of, His people ; not from any intention to lower or obscure His Person or His work, but because there is a notion to be carried out that He has practically withdrawn from this scene of operation, and entrusted all, until the Judgment-day arrives, to the hierarchy which He has commissioned to represent Him. A natural reaction from such claims has injuriously affected the Church in the eyes of the world. Unable to separate the pure idea from Romish pretensions, men suspect in it a design to rule where there exists only a desire, under Christ, to bless.

The impression has been strengthened by advocacy which the Church has received among ourselves.

As a religious reality the Church of England has suffered in the esteem of the people at large through her support being grounded on claims less than those which she possesses as the appointed instrument of Christ's purpose in the spiritual regeneration of His people. To insist on her rights while discrediting her commission is not unnaturally to provoke the charge of secular ambition and class selfishness. If the Church be the channel of no other blessing than can be obtained among the sects, or by the direct approach of each individual man to God ; if she can impart no gift but that which is to be gained in the private study of Scripture or by independent prayer ; if she possess no means of grace which are not shared in by any company of believers who choose to band themselves together under conditions

of their own devising ; if her mission be solely to preach a Gospel which is as well and sometimes better preached elsewhere ; if nothing can be specially urged in her behalf but her possession of a ritual which is alleged to be more edifying, and of a human organisation which is probably more perfect ; then, it is fairly asked, what is the meaning of our claims to a higher authority and our demand for a special hearing ? A superior social position, an acknowledged respectability, a better education and greater refinement, even the prestige of a long tradition, may be things valuable in their way ; but they establish no spiritual claim, and afford no presumption in the Church's favour beyond that which may be urged in behalf of any other religious body.

And so the impression remains that the name of the Church is but an excuse for the possession of certain advantages by a privileged class.

Mischief, too, has been done in another direction by those who would fain take higher ground. Some of us have put forth arbitrary claims in the Church's behalf ; they have laid down precise and stringent rules without perceiving, or at all events without showing, their connection with Christ's purpose. As we observed when thinking of the Sacraments, men's minds revolt against all notions which attribute to God anything which seems arbitrary and unmeaning. If salvation is declared to be bestowed within the Church's pale by a positive decree of God with no assignable ground for the enactment ; if Church unity be enforced, and schism be denounced as a sin, only on the ground of an unexplained command ; if her Sacraments be insisted on as necessary to salvation, as if they were matters of obedience, without revealed connection with the Gospel system of

grace ; then men begin to think that their access to God is being unnecessarily interrupted. Institutions appear to be not merciful helps but artificial restraints, and the most gracious promises are regarded, if not as actual hindrances to the embrace of the Gospel system, yet as taxes on men's endurance in complying with it.

But all such feelings vanish when once it is realised that the Church is the Church of Christ ; that it is no human creation though it is mixed up (perhaps too much mixed up in some instances) with human arrangements ; that it is no earthly corporation organised with a view to spiritual results, but a society charged with a mission, and made the instrument of His grace, by Christ Himself. It is often compared to the ladder in Jacob's dream. We can have no true conception of it if we fix our gaze solely on that lower part which comes in contact with earth, and lack faith to see how the top of it reaches up into Heaven.

In a word, the true solution of our difficulties and the only justification of the Church's claims lies in the fact that she is the ordained medium by which Christ vouchsafes His presence to men. She is this or she is nothing.

Her true members (who are of course not the clergy alone but all the faithful who are duly incorporated into Him) represent and continue His gracious purpose in the world. She is Christ's "Body," the body of which the God-man is the Head, and this, as St. Chrysostom points out, "not only in the way of supremacy but also of consolidation ;" the body so closely united with the Head that the members are one with Him and He with them. Regarding her according to Christ's design, (we are not entering here on the question how far particular branches of the Church are now realising that design,) she is the commissioned human agency through

which He carries out on earth His ever advancing scheme for the regeneration of mankind. He commits to her the preaching of His Word ; He bestows through her the gift of His own heavenly Presence.¹

¹ Without entering here on any discussion on the present position of the Church of England, it is earnestly submitted that we are called upon to keep her spiritual character more steadily in view if she is to be regarded as the appointed instrument of Christ in the land. We believe that, by God's mercy, she is still strong in the essentials of a Church ; strong in growth of sound doctrine, strong in the preaching of God's Word, strong in the administration of the Sacraments, strong in the possession of an apostolical ministry. She is strong too in the awakened zeal and energy of many of her sons and daughters. But difficulties and embarrassments commence at that point where she comes in contact with the State ; in her inability (through arrangements made long ago, and on many accounts unsuited to these times) to stand out in her corporate character as the agent of her Lord, to adapt herself to altered circumstances, to reform herself on minor points, to develop her means of spiritual usefulness, and generally to meet more fully the requirements of an exacting age.

Surely, if she be the visible "body" of Christ in this land, she should be visibly and authoritatively represented before the world. Surely, if she is commissioned to speak in Christ's name, she should have a voice wherewith to make herself heard. Surely, if she is an energising body, she should be doing her Lord's work more systematically, and advance a well-marshalled army under her great Captain, not merely in the persons of scattered individual combatants. If she represents Christ for the continuance and advancement of His kingdom, she clearly ought not to be confined in her efforts by any external human influence. If union with Him in His Sacraments be His own condition of membership, and of participation in the privileges and duties of His "body," ought her affairs to be virtually managed by a State assembly, which assumes to itself the sole right, when it chooses to exercise it, of regulating matters which touch her very life as the faithful handmaid of Christ? especially when it is remembered that this assembly can no longer be regarded as representing the Church's faithful laity, since it largely represents, and to a considerable extent includes, those who are not members of her communion, and since in its constitution it is no longer even necessarily Christian.

Ought we not, as members of Jesus, humbly, calmly, loyally, but

And once more. Our faith in this method of Christ clears our view with respect to the position of those who unhappily stand aloof from the apostolic society. An arbitrary Church theory has to encounter a very serious difficulty. Consistently carried out it excludes those who are without the Church's communion from the possession of all Christian graces, a conclusion which our experience of the individual piety of members of irregular religious bodies directly contradicts. While regretting that separation which we cannot but regard as an act of schism, we must cheerfully acknowledge their zeal, their devotion, and, to some extent, their success. Nay, we may say with St. Paul, even of those who preach a Christ of envy and strife, or a Christ of con-

earnestly, to seek such just reforms as shall correct such confessed anomalies, and place the Church in her true position, free to act, within her proper sphere, in her Master's Name? The ordinances of God alone stand firm and unchangeable, for His wisdom is eternal, and to His eye the future is ever open. The Divine element in the Church admits of no reform, but the human requires it. Man's devices, however piously designed or wisely carried out, as the creation of short-lived beings, must undergo continual revision or fall into certain decay.

Some fear lest attempt at reform should precipitate that threatened change which would affect the Church's worldly wealth and position, and, let it be added, according to human reckoning, her means of usefulness. But surely the better realisation of the purpose of Christ would be a source of strength and of security in any position which is in accordance with His will. The better she makes herself felt as a spiritual institution the firmer will be her hold, too, on her people's loyalty and love. But disestablishment is not the worst thing that can befall the Church of England. Grave misfortune in some respects it might be for the Church; more grave misfortune for the State. But gravest misfortune of all for Church and State together, worse, far worse than anything bitterest enemies can compass and injudicious friends permit, would it be to find in the hour of trial that we had departed from those conditions to which power and success are divinely pledged, and that, while steering with a carnal wisdom on the stream of worldly policy, we had gradually drifted away from the mind and will of Christ.

tention, supposing to add affliction to the Church's bonds, "Notwithstanding every way Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

It has been said, and with good evidence of truth, as appears from a comparison of the soundness of non-churchmen in England and in Scotland with that of various Protestant communities abroad, that the influence of the Church has largely tended to produce the good results which have been achieved among them. They have kept some main doctrines of the faith in proportion as they have clung to the skirts of that garment of the Saviour which they have not feared to rend. But beyond this, though they have not that which the true Church possesses, they have much. There is a power in the very Name of Jesus which cannot be unfruitful in any who call upon it. Their religious system is imperfect. It falls short of Christ's design. Yet we may not deny that our merciful Lord gives them what they ask, though they ask not and do not put themselves in the way to obtain His full gift.

But, as a matter of fact, no Protestant sect believes in or claims the fulness of that sacramental life which is the heritage of the Church.¹

¹ "If a Wesleyan minister preaches his naked Gospel that 'we are all sinners,' and that 'Christ died to save sinners,' that He bids all sinners come to Him; and saith 'Whoso cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out,' this is, of course, fundamental Gospel truth, and when God blesses through it those who know no more, He blesseth them through faithful reception of His truth. So again as to the Presbyterians. They deny in regard to the Holy Communion what we believe; and their account of their communion is somewhat less than what we mean by a spiritual communion. For they speak rather of ascending in mind into Heaven and feeding upon Jesus there by faith, than of praying Him to come by His Spirit into their soul. I mean that the Calvinist Confessions seem to speak rather of man's part than of His; of what faith, enabled by

A grave question here suggests itself with respect to ourselves : Does the Church of England manifest the possession of any special grace in the superior sanctity of its members ?

It is believed that an affirmative answer might with safety be given, were regard solely had to those members who are alive to their privileges and who faithfully avail themselves of them. But Christ's rule is ever the same, "According to your faith be it unto you ;" and it may be that, by the energy of some who are less favoured, He is rebuking the coldness and inconsistency of the mass of English Churchmen, and calling the Church at large into a bolder and more faithful assertion of His truth, and a more thankful employment of the means of grace with which He has so lovingly endowed her.

XX.

LIFE IN CHRIST.

WE have thus endeavoured to trace out in part the present work of our Blessed Lord, and to see how He, Who gave Himself for us upon the Cross, continues to apply the merits of His sacrifice ; how He, Who became Man that He might die, and by His death reconciled us to God, still lives, very Man, imparting to us one by one of His saving grace ; and how all means and appliances of grace have their virtue in

Him, *does*, than of what it *receives* . . . Still, doubtless, He Whom they seek is found by them for that which they seek. They seek a spiritual communion, and doubtless God admits them to that spiritual communion which they desire. . . . They have what they believe ; we what we believe."—DR. PUSEY, *Eirenicon*, pp. 272-5.

this—that they are the channels by which He is pleased to communicate Himself to us.

A word or two before we conclude, lest our hold on these points be supposed by any to render us forgetful of other and co-ordinate truths.

1. It has been already shown how a direct leaning on the active life of Christ consists with a full dependence on the grace of the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity. It is by the co-operation of the Spirit that Jesus is what He is to us; and it is by the influence of the Spirit that we become what we must be towards Him if we are to have a beneficial interest in His salvation. Without the Spirit there is no belief in Christ; for “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost.”¹ Without the Spirit there is no membership in Christ; for it is “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,” in that Baptism wherein we “put on Christ.”² Without the Spirit we cannot be in that vital union with Christ which is the crown of His purpose towards us; “for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.”³

2. We see more clearly the infinite love of the Eternal Father in proportion as we enter more deeply into the reality of that gift which He has bestowed on us in His Son.

Indeed it is faith in the permanency of the Incarnation which supplies us at once with the true answer to objectors who represent the Christian scheme as involving something arbitrary in the Divine counsels, and who allege that the interposition of a Mediator contradicts the Fatherhood of God.

There might be some plausibility in their statements were

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

² 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27.

³ Rom. viii. 9.

certain popular views of the plan of Salvation as sound as they are doubtless well-intentioned. But "looking to Jesus" not only as "the Author," but also as "the Finisher of our faith," we see that the work of Redemption is no mere form gone through to save appearances, and that there is nothing to countenance the notion that the Second Person of the Trinity suddenly interfered to avert the hostility of the First. The loving-kindness of Jehovah can no longer be compared, as it has been compared, to the caprice of an Eastern tyrant who was divided between his better feelings and a supposed obligation to a foolish decree into which he had been surprised; nor can the office of the Eternal Son be likened to the sudden act of an English queen who knelt before her stern lord to save the lives of a company of foreign captives,—when we know how it was the love with which God "so loved the world" from the beginning, that sent His Son in "the fulness of time," to enter into an abiding relationship with man; and when we see the Incarnate Saviour not only acting as man's Representative in the crisis of His earthly career, but extending from age to age the full graces which flow out from His true humanity.

Nor is the Father thrown further back from us because, in His mercy, He has bridged over the gulf which sin sunk between us and Himself. Is His desire for us the weaker, or is our blessing in His desire the less, because instead of leaving us to our own devices, which must end, as the history of man's unaided thought shows, in failure, He has provided a sure and certain means by which we may pass over into peace? Is He less accessible to His creatures because instead of allowing them to struggle vainly "o'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent," He has opened a royal road which brings them safely into His Presence?

3. As was also plainly marked, we do not detract one jot from the power of Faith because we seek to enlarge its area. We began with a firm conviction that man is "reconciled to God by the Death of His Son," before we proceeded to inquire how we are "Saved by His Life." Faith in the Cross is not lessened when we see Christ extending the merits of the Cross by His present action. The Cross lives on in His all-prevailing Intercession, just as the Incarnation lives on, not only as a Divine reality in the Person of the God-man, but practically in His administration by which He communicates to us its graces. Thus by "a new and living way," ever fresh in sacrificial efficacy, ever powerful in the gift of a more abundant life,—the way consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say His Flesh,—we draw near to God in full assurance of Faith. We thus see what a true faith is. It is such a faith as brings us to God in Christ. We are accepted by God when God sees us "in" Him. It is not because we believe ourselves to be justified, but because we are justified by being joined to Christ, and owned by Him, that we have peace with God. Faith brings us, when we have wandered and sinned against our calling, to the feet of Jesus. Faith pleads His Cross ; invites His Intercession ; obtains the sprinkling of His Blood ; rises to Him in heartfelt worship ; receives Him through His appointed means ; is united to Him by His life-bestowing Presence ; abides in Him by the grace of His Spirit ; and, in virtue of His indwelling, bringeth forth much fruit. So does He pass us on as His people into the Presence of the Father, and we are "accepted in the Beloved."

We are thus drawn out of ourselves, out of our own self-consciousness, and the sphere of mere feeling, into contact with One external to us. And here we find a sure standing-

ground amid the perplexities and the controversies of the age in which we live. Men speak as if Christianity were but the reflection of contemporary religious thought ; as if its doctrines, and even what we regard as its facts, might be remodelled from time to time to suit modern ideas. The Church, as we are so often reminded, has not raised the world to her own standard of faith and practice : she must therefore, it is said, lower her standard to suit the world. Religion, to gain acceptance, must adapt itself to the present generation of men.

And so it might be if Religion were merely man's advanced feeling after God, or if God had simply given us a certain amount of inward light and then left us to adapt it to our spiritual needs. But Christianity is more than this. It is the introduction of a Divine Person into the world, and the absolute committal of men's highest interests to His keeping. It is not that the Son of God has come, and having opened to us a passing glimpse of the Heaven into which He has returned, has bidden us work out for ourselves the problem of its attainment, but that He abides, our Guide, our Teacher, the actual Medium of communication between ourselves and Heaven, and the very source and stay of our spiritual life. What matter, then, save for the sad spectacle which they reveal, and for the guilt which they involve, are the opposition and the sneers of the unbelieving ? We see Him Who sitteth secure upon His throne far above the water-floods of error, and Who reigneth still, be the earth never so unquiet. We are not disturbed at these voices of men, for He to Whom we cling is not dependent on their suffrages ; He is no shifting and uncertain creation of human intellect, but a very present Lord.

Elisha in Dothan saw the rescue which God was providing

for him. His servant saw indeed the horses and chariots and the great host of the king of Syria,—a gallant band, doubtless, with spears flashing, and armour gleaming in the morning sun ; but he did not see that grander and more numerous company which thronged the mountain-side, those horses and chariots which shone with the very light of Heaven,—the host of Him “Who maketh His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.”¹ But these were there notwithstanding. Their presence was a fact irrespective of his perception of it. So is it with ourselves and Christ. While, with Elisha, we intercede for the spiritually blind, “Lord, I pray Thee, open their eyes that they may see,” He that is with us is none the less real because of their failure.

We “know Him Whom we have believed.” Long ago He took us as little children into His arms and blessed us. He was near to us in the grace of a Christian childhood. Perhaps we remember how in early years we were conscious of His sweet attraction. As the cares of life multiplied, and its temptations gathered round us with fiercer force, amid our falls and our failures He did not forsake us.

We sinned against Him. Presently better thoughts came to us. That feeling of repentance was, by the Spirit, from Christ.

We turn our eyes to Him in our anguish, as the dying Israelite turned his to the uplifted serpent. We look to Him for comfort, and we are not disappointed of our hope. We plead His Cross ; we implore the cleansing of His Blood ; we urge His sufferings for our sakes ; and lo ! Jesus, at the right hand of Glory, comes to our aid. He accompanies us in our soul-struggle ; He pleads for us His sacrifice ; He

¹ 2 Kings vi. 15—17.

presents in our behalf His precious Blood ; He puts on the incense of His own merits ; our faint cry is heard and accepted in His all-prevailing Intercession.

Day by day He watches over us. He, Who knows our difficulties and trials by His own experience, sends that grace which is sufficient for us, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Day by day He is near to us. "Behold," He says, "I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door——" In the solitude of the lonely chamber, to the sadder loneliness of the desolate heart, He comes in graciousness. Nay, He seeks admission when we are slow to accord it. He, Who opens gladly when we knock, is content to wait for us. Who shall tell of the gladness when we rise and let Him in ?

He comes to meet us in that House of Prayer to which His special Presence is pledged. In the sound of the church bells His voice calls us as certainly as if we could distinguish the music of its tones. As we unite in prayer and raise the hymn of praise, He is in the midst of us as surely as if we saw Him descend in glory upon the altar.

And oh ! as we kneel before that altar, and the consecrating word is spoken, and the sacramental bread and wine are received, who can describe the blessed nearness which He then vouchsafes ?

And so the silent work goes on within the Christian ; the putting on of the new man ; the renewal after the image of Him Who has re-created him ; the fulfilment of the exceeding great and precious promise that in Christ the restored child of Adam may become even here partaker, in his measure, of the very nature of God.¹

¹ 2 St. Peter i. 4.

Thus till the great day comes, and the Mediatorial Kingdom shall be merged in the consummation of glory ! Thus, till He returns, the same Jesus, on the clouds through which He passed from His disciples' sight, and by the trump of the Archangel calls quick and dead to Judgment ! Then, brother or sister in Christ, will it be seen whether we, who trust that we have been reconciled to God by the Death of His Son, have so been united to that Son in this world as to "be saved" for ever "by His Life."

THE END.

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